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*For my family and Jin, Verena and Simon*

**My special thanks go to my supervisor Prof. Seidl for her patience  
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## Table of Contents

<b>Zusammenfassung.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Genre.....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1. GENRE STUDIES.....	12
1.2. GENRE FILMS.....	15
1.3. ELEMENTS OF GENRE.....	17
1.3.1. <i>Institutional Aspects</i> .....	17
1.3.2. <i>Conventions &amp; Genre Markers</i> .....	19
1.3.3. <i>Audience Perception</i> .....	23
<b>2. Episodic Film &amp; Genre.....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1. THE EPISODIC FILM – A DEFINITION.....	27
2.2. EPISODIC FILM AS GENRE?.....	29
<b>3.Structures.....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1. THE CLASSIC (HOLLYWOOD) STRUCTURE.....	32
3.2. THE EPISODIC STRUCTURE.....	34
<b>4. Establishing Narrative Networks.....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1. SIMULTANEITY.....	39
4.2. (DIFFERENT) TIMES & PLACES.....	41
4.3. MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES.....	43
4.4. CAUSE-AND-EFFECT.....	44
4.5. CHANCE & COINCIDENCE.....	45
4.6. REPETITION & SIMILARITY.....	47
<b>5. Narratology &amp; Film.....</b>	<b>49</b>

<b>6. Film Analysis.....</b>	<b>52</b>
6.1. SIMULTANEITY IN <i>SHORT CUTS &amp; MAGNOLIA</i> .....	53
6.2. (DIFFERENT) TIMES & PLACES IN <i>THE RED VIOLIN &amp; THE HOURS</i> .....	64
6.3. MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES IN <i>VANTAGE POINT &amp; 11:14</i> .....	74
6.4. CAUSE-AND-EFFECT IN <i>SLIDING DOORS &amp; LOLA RENNT</i> .....	85
6.5. CHANCE & COINCIDENCE IN <i>AMORES PERROS &amp; NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU</i> .....	98
6.6. REPETITION & SIMILARITY IN <i>BABEL &amp; WOMEN LOVE WOMEN</i> .....	109
6.7. SUMMARY .....	116
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Table of Figures.....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Index.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>CV.....</b>	<b>132</b>

## **Zusammenfassung**

Die Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Episodenfilm als eigenständiges Genre. Kapitel 1 nähert sich dem Thema Film Genre von einem neutralen Standpunkt, und es werden drei Faktoren erläutert, die zur Entstehung eines Genres ihren grundlegenden Beitrag leisten: die Produktion bestimmter Filme, konventionalisierte Merkmale dieser Filme in Kombination mit der aktiven Tätigkeit des Filmpublicums, gewisse Filme einer Kategorie zuzuordnen. Kapitel 2 bespricht verschiedene Definitionen zum Episodenfilm and wirft die Frage auf ob Episodenfilme einer eigenen Gattung zugeordnet werden können. Kapitel 3 widmet sich dem strukturellen Unterschied zwischen dem klassischen Spielfilm und dem Episodenfilm. Weiters werden unterschiedliche Formen des Episodenfilmes erklärt. Der Aufbau erfolgt in zwei Varianten: Episoden treten entweder nacheinander, wie eine Aneinanderreihung von Kurzfilmen, oder aber verschachtelt auf, wobei das Ausmaß der einzelnen Episoden von kurzen Vignetten bis zu längeren Geschichten reichen kann. Kapitel 4 behandelt diejenigen Eigenschaften, die wiederkehrend in verschiedenen Episodenfilmen, als generische Merkmale bezeichnet werden können. Diese Merkmale werden mit Beispielen erläutert. Kapitel 5 bespricht die Narratologie als Werkzeug, die in abgewandelter Form zur Besprechung von Filmen dient. Kapitel 6 besteht aus der Filmanalyse, die 12 verschiedene Filme behandelt, die eine der charakteristischen Merkmale in dominanter Weise anwenden. Vor allem wird auch gezeigt, wie der Effekt dieser Merkmale durch verschiedene Filmtechniken erzeugt aber auch hervorgehoben wird. Durch die episodische Erzählweise, und die grundlegenden Unterschiede zum klassischen Spielfilm ist es meist schwierig, einen Episodenfilm als ein Ganzes zu verstehen. Im Zuge dessen dienen diese Merkmale nicht nur als Teil der Geschichte sondern erfüllen auch die Funktion, verschiedene Episoden aneinanderzuführen, und insbesondere dienen sie als Bindeglieder, die Netzwerke erstellen. Durch diese Netzwerke werden letztendlich verschiedene Episoden zu einem ganzen Film verbunden. Die anfängliche Frage, ob Episodenfilme ein eigenständiges Genre ausmachen wird insbesondere durch die Besprechung des episodischen Aufbaus, der

charakteristischen Merkmale, sowie auch der Filmanalyse, klar befürwortet. In diesem Sinne behaupte ich, dass der Episodenfilm ein eigenes Genre darstellt, das folgendermaßen definiert werden kann: Der Film wird episodisch erzählt und beinhaltet zumindest zwei Episoden, denen im gleichen Ausmaß Entwicklungsraum gewährt wird. Weiters werden die charakteristischen Merkmale in den Film eingeflochten, die sich als Teil einzelner Episoden durch den ganzen Film ziehen, oder aber als Bindeglied zwischen den Episoden dienen. Folglich wird das Genre klar definiert anhand seiner Struktur und bedient sich mehrerer Geschichten, die als Netzwerk innerhalb eines Filmes erzählt werden.

## Introduction

The paper will discuss episodic films as an independent genre and discuss its genre markers, outlining how these characteristic features are visualised in a selection of different films. This raises some problematic aspects. First of all, the term “episodic film” as such is seemingly not a definite label. Bordwell speaks of “network narratives”<sup>1</sup> while other sources offer the terms “anthology film”, “omnibus film” or “composite film” interchangeably referring to the same type of films.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, I will stick to “episodic film” simply because I feel that this term most adequately points at the major characteristic feature. Secondly, it seems quite difficult to provide a clear-cut definition of “episodic film” on which a generic discussion could be based. Glossaries in study books suggest different definitions which could be applied to some episodic films but turn out to be inadequate when discussing others. And finally, there has not been any detailed critical discussion on episodic films as a separate generic category which raises the issue if they can be considered a genre at all. Bordwell provides a discussion of “network narratives” in his *Poetics of Cinema* (2008), outlining recurrent features and pointing at differences to the classic structure. Lommel identifies episodic film as a genre, but his essay *Überlegungen zur Aktualität des Episodenfilms* (2005) is more concerned with the recent popularity of the format, while Treber analyzes episodic storytelling in a selection of films in “*Auf Abwegen*” (2005) leaving aside the question of genre. Still, I argue that episodic film constitutes its own genre. I base this claim on three different viewpoints: First of all, Derrida’s statement that “there is no genreless text” and that “every text participates in one or several genres” (230); secondly Ryall’s argument that genre constitutes a “triangular image composed of artist/film/audience” (qtd. in Neale 2000:12), and thirdly, to round off my argument, Tudor’s belief that “genre is what viewers collectively believe it to be” (7). In his paper *The Law of Genre* (1992), Derrida discusses the notion of genre as an “institutionalised

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<sup>1</sup> See Bordwell’s *Poetics of Cinema*, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The following websites, for example, briefly discuss episodic films under their respective terms pointing at the major characteristic of episodic storytelling and the employment of different storylines within the whole film: <http://www.musik-im-fremdsprachenunterricht.de/lacrash/index.php/step-1/12-film-analysis/episodic-film>; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthology\\_film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthology_film); [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composite\\_film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composite_film); <http://www.bender-verlag.de/lexikon/lexikon.php?begriff=Omnibusfilm>;

classification” (221) where a text “corresponds to a given class” (228). A class, or genre, should then be identifiable by a set of specific codes or traits according to which we can “adjudicate whether a given text belongs to this genre or perhaps to that genre” (229). In his view, these sets of identifiable traits determine the participation of a text in a specific genre (see Derrida 229). Ryall’s triangle points at the mutual cooperation between the creators, the film and the audience and hence the institutional aspects, conventions and genre markers and finally the role of the viewers, all of which contribute to generic classification (see Neale 2000: 12). Tudor mentions the problematic aspect of what he calls the “critic’s dilemma”, which is directed at the activity of specific selection of a corpus and he continues to posit the question whether the text came first or the conventions which define a genre (5). For him, genre covers common generic features which, in addition, have to be universally recognized by the audience (7).

In this sense, to discuss episodic films as an independent genre, the main aim of the paper will be a discussion of these identifiable codes and traits, which constitute the genre.

Genre has become a widely applied and almost naturally accepted notion. Literature has its own generic categories, which readers deliberately pick according to their taste and in the same manner people have their preferences when listening to music. Considering film genre from a viewer’s perspective, terms and labels defining a specific genre quite naturally trigger associations, hypotheses and expectations. We have established some kind of overall knowledge which enables us to cue certain images, features and characteristic elements if we encounter terms such as “western”, “musical”, “horror film” in film reviews, DVD covers and film posters. Simply put, by encountering a generic term we basically know, either consciously or subconsciously, what a film will be about. In the same manner, the term “episodic film” will have an effect on viewer expectation. Where does this knowledge stem from? Film viewing has become such a steadfast cultural event and people have seen a number of films which remind them of films they have seen before. They are able to define films according to their similarities and differences in relation to other films, which is one of the ways how film studies started to classify individual films, eventually

placing them into bigger categories. What has become a natural awareness of genre, however, is subject to more elaborate discussion. Films do not simply constitute a genre, just because filmmakers planned to produce a western or a musical. Genre studies show that several different factors influenced production and circulation of films which were governed by deliberate choices made by studios.

The first parts of the paper will set out covering the aspects of film genre, briefly discussing the emergence of film genre studies in the 1950s. Another movement dating back to that time was the auteur theory, which mainly focused on recurrent characteristics in the corpus of film created by the persona of a director, or so to speak, the auteur of a film. It should be noted at this point that I will not consider the auteur aspect in my discussion of episodic film, despite the fact that some directors (for example, Jarmusch, Garcia, or Iñárritu) predominantly employ the episodic narrative structure in their work. Chapter 1 will outline the elements of Ryall's triangle – the elements of genre - discussing institutional aspects, conventions, and audience perception.

Looking for a definition of “Episodic Film”, chapter 2 will focus on episodic film as a generic category. Considering that there are just as many different definitions as there are different outputs, it is crucial to narrow down a definition to episodic film's basic characteristic element: episodic storytelling. As opposed to other categories such as the western, musical or horror genres, I feel that the episodic genre lacks a common iconography or recurring theme or an overall similar look at the surface, and its bedrock pattern is heavily based on its narrative structure. The category covers a variety of different films, starting with the self-contained chain of short sketches (as in *Coffee & Cigarettes*, *Nine Lives*, *Paris Je T'aime*, among others) ranging to separate and yet loosely connected episodes (as in *Smoke*, *Things You Can Tell Just By Looking At Her*, *Amores Perros* and others) up to the interlocking episodic structure (as, for example in *Bobby*, *The Five Senses*, *The Hours* or *Love Actually*). As the striking similarity within the generic group is the narrative structure, its themes and stories are frequently borrowed from other genres, proving genre hybridization and mixing of different generic



elements. Nevertheless, the episodic structure remains the most characteristic and dominant feature. In terming *Vantage Point* and *Love Actually*, for example, I would opt for categorising them as episodic film in the subgenre of political thriller and romantic comedy, respectively.

Taking into account the importance of structural aspects when categorizing episodic film as a genre, chapter 3 will provide an overview of the classic and the episodic structure of film. As opposed to the classic structure with its clear-cut beginning, middle and end, the episodic structure orders its episodes either in sequential or interlocking mode. Moreover, plot development and character aspects are processed differently in contrast to the classic structure which basically centres on the protagonist (one main character) and the pursuit of his/her goal in a progressing chain of cause & effect (one main plotline)<sup>3</sup>, while the episodic film connects several plotlines, including several characters in each plotline, who are granted equal dominance throughout the film.

As the main part of the paper, chapter 4 will focus on characteristic traits of episodic films. As the only source discussing recurring elements in this type of films, Lommel outlines four elementary aspects which are frequently employed in the narrative structure of episodic films. He lists the feature of simultaneity, (different) times & places, multi-perspectives, and cause & effect (130) to which I added the feature of coincidence & chance, and repetition & similarity. In combination with the structural episodic pattern, I argue that these recurring features constitute the genre markers of episodic film. Considering the difference to the classic feature film with its unambiguous, mostly linear presentation of the story, episodic films are frequently more difficult to perceive as a coherent whole. In my view, these six features are not only characteristic of these films but also have a function as important linking elements, connecting individual episodes and eventually placing them into an overreaching context. Hence, narrative networks are established which first of all combine individual episodes into one piece and eventually contribute to the meaning of the whole film. These features are interwoven into the narrative, for example regarding character relations (A

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<sup>3</sup> See Thompson's *Storytelling in the New Hollywood*, 2001.

happens to know B by chance) or expressed by means of stylistic devices such as similar shots and repetitive frames, or lines of dialog in different episodes.

Reconsidering the narrative structure which seems to me the bedrock characteristic of episodic films, the final parts of the paper will discuss a selection of films, applying the concepts of film narratology for analysis. Despite the fact narratology was first and foremost limited to written texts, film-texts follow the same principles of story and plot and as Deleyto claims, “for a narrative theory to be consistent” [...] “it must work when applied to the study of a film narrative” (218). Chapter 5 will briefly outline different aspects of film narratology, while the film analysis in chapter 6 will discuss different types of episodic films and the visualisation of characteristic features mentioned in chapter 4.

The choice of films in my discussion is based on Staiger’s suggestion of the “a priori method”, which basically defines genre categories by selecting common generic elements in advance and the “empiricist method” involving films that have already been chosen as representing the genre (2003: 186-187). Despite my aforementioned argument that episodic film has not been treated as an independent genre category, film reviews, discussion boards on the internet movie database and, moreover, Treber’s *Auf Abwegen* (2005) and Bordwell’s *Poetics of Cinema* (2008) provide a list of exemplary films which were helpful to choose a number of films for this paper. Since the main aim is to point out how generic features are employed in different films, the analysis will not consider that some episodic films are a cooperative product of several directors but always take the film as one piece of film-text.

# 1. Film Genre

## 1.1. Genre Studies

The study of film genre as an academic practice is a rather recent development. In Altman's view, the study of film genre is an extended practice of literary genre studies, claiming that much of what is said about film genre is based on literary genre criticism (1999: 13). Writings on film genre have initially been limited to commercial feature films and particularly to Hollywood films. Reasons for this can be found in the history of cinema study, and in the history of genre as a concept within the fields of written fiction and drama, since Hollywood borrowed its stories from novels and the stage (see Altman 1992: 25). Neale underlines this claim by listing works on individual genres dating back to the 1950s, which predominantly discussed Hollywood films (2000: 10). Grant (2007: 7) argues that Hollywood's "classical narrative style" and its rapid growth from the early beginnings of Hollywood filmmaking contributed a lot to the development of genre films. These films provided successful formulae which were taken up in repetitive ways or in variation to aim at commercial hits at the box-offices. The Hollywood studio era between the 1920s and 1950s produced movies in a competitive, profit-motivated context, supplying movies as "products" resulting from an industrial mode of production (see Grant 2007: 7). Following that, it could be said that producers basically regulated and specified the projects, which meant that during the studio era, filmmakers, cast and crew, as contracted to the requirements of the studios, had rare scope for artistic development (see Grant 2007: 7). Thus, the studio as an institution that governed production and evaluated popular formulae, patterns and conventions already hints at their important role in the emergence of genre films and consequently film genre studies.

In the introduction to the *Film Genre Reader III*, Grant considers Robert Warshaw's articles on the gangster film and the western published in 1948 and 1954, respectively, and André Bazin's essays dating back to the early fifties as the first instances of critical genre discussion (XV). Another significant field of study, which set out in the mid '50s was the auteur theory or auteurism which focused on

individual directors' work, examining authorial viewpoints and personal traits within the framework of specific genres. Thus, genre criticism and auteurism were seen as tandem approaches to film critique in the early stages<sup>4</sup>. As Grant points out (2007: 56), auteur theory provided a way of looking at film directors' style foregrounded against the background of genre. According to Andrew Sarris, auteur theory is based on three premises which may be visualized in the form of three concentric circles: "the outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning"; and the corresponding roles of the director being those of a technician, a stylist and an auteur (587). Pointing at the importance of the auteur as a distinguishable personality at the level of the whole work, he strongly argues that "over a group of films, a director must exhibit certain recurrent characteristics of style, which serve as his signature" (586). Grant de-emphasizes Sarris' view by saying that "all genre movies reveal something about their maker" (2007: 58).

The tendency to observe and examine individual directors' works and hence the focus on individualized corpuses of films, auteurism scarcely provided the tools to examine the whole range of Hollywood's output, neither in "charting trends" nor "developments within it" (see Neale 2000: 11). Evidently, auteur theory disregarded the studios' "institutional status, institutional conventions and the audience" which in Neale's view were the main reasons why attention was turned to genre criticism as a separate field by the end of the 1960s (2000: 11). In Ryall's view, genre criticism is based on three different aspects, which constitute a specific class of genre and he proposes the following definition:

The master image is a triangle composed of artist/film/audience. Genres may be defined as patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the film maker, and their reading by an audience (qtd. in Neale 2000: 12).

In other words, genre films are produced according to certain sets of conventions which are shared and recognised by the audience. This leads us to the "critic's dilemma" as proposed by Andrew Tudor (5): What makes a western the generic

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<sup>4</sup> Both Grant (2007: 56-79) and Neale (2000: 10-11) provide a brief discussion on auteur theory and its beginning starting out in Europe in the French film journal *Cahiers du cinéma* in the mid 1950s. According to Neale, auteur theory was based on three basic premises: 1. Cinema was a realm of individual and personal expression. 2. In Cinema, the figure equivalent to the artist or author (as in painting or literature) could be the director, 3. Directorial artistry and cinematic authorship can be found in any routine output of film (2000:11).

category of “the western”? To simply say that a film shares some identifiable features and conventional markers with other films previously classified as a western may assign it to its generic class but obviously posits the problematic preliminary activity of specific and systematic selection:

To take a genre such as a western, analyze it, and list its principal characteristics, is to beg the question that we must first isolate the body of films that are westerns. But they can only be isolated on the basis of the “principal characteristics”, which can only be discovered from the films themselves after they have been isolated. (5)

Thus, defining the corpus which constitutes a genre has occupied critics during the early stages of film genre studies. Tudor’s solution is based on a common cultural consensus, stressing that works should be analysed according to what viewers would agree belong to one particular genre. A film is not just a western because it shares common generic features, but also because it would be universally recognized as such from a cultural perspective, since “genre is what we collectively believe it to be” (Tudor 7). Tudor’s dilemma, which is compared by Lacey (2000: 211-212) with the “chicken and egg conundrum” obviously raises the question whether the text came first or the patterns and conventional features which constitute its genre. Here, I would like to take up a point outlined by Grant, Neale and Altman. All three authors discuss “The Great Train Robbery” which is now considered as the first instance in the history of the western genre. Upon its release in 1903, however, the generic category of the western was unheard of, and the film was promoted and marketed applying other categories such as the “chase film”, or the “railroad film” which were quite successful at the time (Grant 2007: 6, Neale 2000: 44, Altman 1999: 30). The classification of that film as a “western”, was made in retrospect which is still a practice frequently adopted in the field of genre studies after a corpus of films is analyzed and grouped according to their generic similarities and common features. This mode of critical operation is taken up by Altman, when he states that studio discourse is directed primarily towards the future whereas the critics typically turn towards the past, and moreover, “locate the films in a more extended past” (1999: 124). The role of the critic, then, is defined by the activity of mapping out and describing generic structures by pinpointing differences but also similarities (see Grant 2003: 128)

Nevertheless, the study of genre covers several aspects and is not limited to labels and terms of certain groups of films. In Altman's view, the notion of "genre" covers the range of being a model or a formula of production taken up by studios; a structure inherent as a textual system in an individual film; an etiquette or label applied by distributors and screening venues and finally the viewer's literacy and ability to recognize and understand a specific genre (1999: 14).

## **1.2. Genre Films**

Contemporary film viewers are familiar with major terms such as the western, the musical, the horror film, the melodrama or the action/adventure film. The list could be continued and every study book on genre lists several different categories<sup>5</sup>. We can easily describe a film in generic terms, stating that it is a comedy, musical, or action film without troubling ourselves with the question of its inherent significant features. In the same way, labels on film posters and DVDs or reviews including terms of description prompt viewers' expectations of whether the film will satisfy their taste. Leaning on a survey carried out by Gomery and Stones, Neale (2000: 40) discusses film circulation and the role and function of cinema, cinema programming and cinema specialization as "generic cues". The proposition that some cinemas specialized in screening only particular films such as the western and action films during the studio era, certainly still holds true, yet on a much wider scale. Considering filmic distribution, I would say that multiplex cinemas show a certain range of films, blockbusters and expectedly highly successful productions, whereas non-Hollywood or independent genre films are most probably scheduled in smaller venues which address a different kind of viewer group. In Neale's words, viewers "adjust [their] generic expectations" (2000: 40).

How did we come to classify films and label them as viewers in such a simple and natural way? The repetitive nature of genre films builds upon the imitation of prior films and leads to a conscious or even subconscious audience awareness of

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<sup>5</sup> See Grant (2007), Grant (2003), Neale (2000), Altman (1999) which discuss different major genres.

individual films (see Sobchack 104). Simply put, viewers recognize and understand a certain type of genre film, because they have seen several similar ones before. As Sobchack notes (106), genre films rely on formal matters both in content and in style since they imitate other formal objects. The form follows a definite beginning, middle and end where all major conflicts are resolved and little room for ambiguity is left neither in characters, plot or iconography (107). Sobchack's structural definition is closely tied to the classical Hollywood structure of feature films which will be discussed in chapter 3.

[...] genre films are those commercial feature films which through repetition and variation, tell familiar stories, with familiar characters in familiar situations (Grant 2007: 1).

Grant's simple definition incorporates the studio which produces the feature films, the generic features which have been conventionalised through recurring presentation and the familiarity which is part of the viewer's activity of perception, thus underlining the triangle image suggested by Ryall. The ability to extract conventional features which are characteristic to each genre frequently supersedes the institutional aspects of film studios considering the production of genre films or even the shared features themselves, since genre films have come to be understood easily and labels for categorising individual films are taken for granted. It is important to note, however, that genre is not a static concept. Despite the fact that genres are understood as defining and grouping individual films according to their features, genres tend to change over time which is due to changing production modes, changed viewer demands and considering the strive for novelty, the reassessment of conventions (see Altman 1999: 49-68)<sup>6</sup>. In Grant's view, genre movies have been commonly understood as inevitable expressions of the zeitgeist, displayed by shifting popularity and changing patterns and he claims that genre movies are "always about the time and place in which they are made" (2007: 5-6). The next section will cover the aspects that govern genre productions, conventions and audience perception that has

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<sup>6</sup> Altman supplements his argument by pointing at generic change in relation to change of generic names. His discussion includes, for example the musical, which in his view emerged from the musical comedy, musical drama, musical romance, musical farce and musical melodrama until at some point in time the adjective was outweighed by the noun "the musical" (see 1999: 53).

augmented the natural understanding of genres and the viewership's film literacy, which has most evidently become part of our culture.

### **1.3. Elements of Genre**

#### **1.3.1. Institutional Aspects**

Both Grant (2007: 8) and Neale (2000: 231) compare the studio era production methods with Ford's car assembly lines, yet with interchangeable parts since films are unlike cars and not marked by sameness considering the overall output. Discussing its economic function by discussing the multitude of filmic "products", Neale points out that examining the arrays of output each film is diverse; each film is new and each of its genres always different. Nevertheless, within each genre the output is always similar (2000: 231). It should be stressed once again that generic categories were first and foremost a critical process of labelling and terming and hence grouping individual films into different categories. Genre films in turn result from deliberate choices made by production studios (see Altman 1999: 38-48).

In principle, producing genre films targeted at maximising the gross profit. Taking the economic aim as the major motivation of studio heads and producers, Altman outlines six stages of prospective rules which have been followed by film making institutions: (1) obtaining box office information and revenues marking the success of a film, which were (2) analysed accordingly to discover what made the film specifically successful. (3) The assumed formula for the success of a particular film was incorporated into the planning of a new film and (4) once again revenue and total grossing were considered to reassess the success formula. Then, (5) the revised formula was applied again in a new film which was a process indefinitely continued (6) by studios.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Altman applies these six stages, which he calls the "Producer's Game" by outlining the development of BIOPICS as a generic category. He acknowledges that genre studies predominantly focus on the critic's activity of defining a corpus. Yet he refrains from looking backwards to constitute the corpus of what is now labelled as "biopics" in order to emphasize how studios deliberately generated production decisions by starting with a discussion of a film released in 1929 and tracing production decision "until the genre is fully recognized". (1999: 38-39)



This procedure based on applying similar features and variation in order to reassess and map out successful formulae, most certainly implies that “genres are neither static nor fixed” but always subject to ongoing change, process and development (see Grant 2007: 34). The bedrock and basic patterns of a genre may remain the same but as Grant strongly argues, “each new film and cycle [adds] to the tradition and modifies it” at the same time (2007: 34). The dynamics of production are strongly dependent on the audience and as Braudy notes that genre films ask the audience ‘Do you still want to believe this?’, he continues to say that

[...] popularity is the audience answering, ‘Yes.’ Change in genre occurs when the audience says, ‘That’s too infantile a form of what we believe. Show us something more complicated.’ (1977: 179).

Hence, viewers submit their demand for familiarity AND novelty and their approval for a piece of work are expressed through consumption and consequently by means of box office revenues, which in turn is taken up by studios and reconsidered for future projects. On a large scale the steady focus on viewers’ expectation and taste results in what is defined as genre-mixing or hybridization. Genre films are not essentially pure but show traces of combinative features taken from several genres. In other words, generic frameworks frequently overlap and blur the boundaries among different categories. The most elementary instance of hybridization can be traced in the classical structure of Hollywood feature films, which according to Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger, incorporate a romance in one of their plotlines (1985: 16-17). Moreover, studios have refrained from explicitly labelling films according to one exclusive category. This again, stems from economic motivation modulated by the institution to maximize viewers’ reception. As Altman points out (1999: 128-130), “naming a genre is tantamount to taking a political stand” which bears the risk to repel viewers who “systematically avoid a particular genre”. In order to prevent decreasing viewership and confined expectations, studios have made it their goal to attract audiences who “recognize and appreciate [...] particular genre[s], while avoiding repulsion of those who dislike the genre” (Altman 1999: 128). This is achieved by close collaboration with scriptwriters aiming at mixing as many genres as possible in order to address and entice the maximum number of viewers. Altman concludes his argument by saying that “Hollywood has throughout its history developed

techniques that make genre mixing not only easy, but virtually obligatory” (1999: 132).

### **1.3.2. Conventions and Genre Markers**

As has been mentioned before, genre films work upon mutual cooperation between makers and viewers. The mutual activity between studios and viewers clearly depends upon conventions according to which films are produced, perceived and categorised. Elements of style and narrative devices are repeated and consequently conventionalised. These conventions generate frameworks which significantly mark individual groups of genre. According to Grant, conventional markers cover the components of iconography (comprising objects, significant stylistic devices, aural conventions), narratives, settings and characters (2007: 11-20).

The term “iconography” has its roots in art history where it was applied to define visual concepts, signs and themes (see Grant 2007: 11, Neale 2000: 13). In the field of film genre studies, Buscombe (14-16) differentiates between the “outer form” and “inner form” in his discussion of the western as a generic category. The outer form incorporates all significant objects which mark a western, such as horses, clothes, indoor and outdoor settings, tools of trade and weapons, whereas the inner form marks the individual film’s themes and stories. In the same manner, Buscombe argues that an enquiry about inner and outer forms of other genres may equally show that the “subject matter dealt with is determined by a series of formal and given patterns” (19). The relation between the outer and inner form is crucial as is the context in which these icons, signs and objects are employed. In simple terms, a knife, coffin and crucifix adopt different symbolic meaning in a horror film while these objects will most certainly be ascribed different contextual functions in a comedy or melodrama. While they may be obligatory items in a horror film by bearing highly significant meaning, the iconography will be neutral or not existent in a comedy, limiting the objects to simple props (Cf. Grant 2007: 12).

Iconographic devices are not limited to objects but also function on an aural level involving music and sound effects. According to Grant (2007: 11), “all genres often feature Wagnerian leitmotifs associated with particular characters or places in order to enhance a desired emotional effect in support of the story”. Fast paced dramatic music is certainly more common for chase sequences in action films than in the soundtrack of a romantic comedy.

A third component, which carries iconographic traits is the *mise-en-scène* of a genre. Expressed through stylistic devices such as lighting (for example, the significant low-key lighting in film noir), set design (Gothic castles in the horror film; the Wild West and American frontier in the western film), and costumes (Stetson hats and spurs in the western, pinstripe suits in the gangster film), these elements provide individual genres with a “visual shorthand for conveying information and meaning succinctly” (see Grant 2007: 12). Despite Buscombe’s claim that major defining characteristics of genre are visual<sup>8</sup>, not all genres have a clear set of iconographic signs. Lacey (2005: 48) argues, that films with less dominant iconographic arrays of visual conventions and sounds such as the biopic, frequently depend wholly upon the central character and a recognizable narrative. In the same manner, Neale claims that only a handful of genres can be defined in terms of visual characteristics since they simply lack a specific iconography; his list includes the social problem film, the biopic, romantic drama and the psychological horror film (2000:16).

The narrative delineates the context in which the conventional signs are combined and provides the framework of individual genre films. As was briefly mentioned before, genre films often deploy the classical narrative structure where the initial problem or disruption is resolved at the end. Yet for Lacey (2005: 52), the disruption may function as a genre marker, outlining that conflicts within a family will most probably be found in melodrama whereas the criminal activities of a drug baron will be the narrative of a gangster film. Speaking of disruption, both Grant and Schatz observe the threat to the social order, frequently part of the narrative, when conflicts are condensed into social debates and tensions between

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<sup>8</sup> Buscombe gives the following examples: guns, cars, clothes in the gangster film; clothes and dancing in addition to the music in the musical; castles, coffins, and teeth in horror movies (20).

individual characters and society or heroes and villains (Grant 2007: 16)<sup>9</sup>. “The gangster, the monster, the villain, all threaten normative society in a different way” (Grant 2007:16); hence the basic principle of the narrative is the “restoration of the social order” (see Sobchack 113). For Grant, the struggle between an individual in conflict thematically mirrors “cultural tensions” and “negotiation between desire and restraint”, which adds to the popularity and the repetitiveness of genre films (2007: 16). Similarly, Sobchack discusses genre plots outlining the tension between individual and group as portrayed in the war film, the swashbuckler, the detective film, the horror film and the musical. The overall outcome being that opposing forces resemble real pressures of everyday life as the audience “lives out its individual dreams of glory and terror” by identifying with the stereotyped characters of the fantasy life (112).

Narrative progression, then, adjoins incident after incident leading to the inevitable conclusion which leaves no unanswered questions about the major characters and their fate. In Sobchack’s (107) view, the shape of the narratives is the most important single aspect of genre films, predominantly concerned with “what is happening” rather than “why it is happening”. Only scenes that advance the plot are permitted and only dialogues which keep things moving are employed in order to create causality and closure (Sobchack 107). Grant considers narrative closure to be a convention of genre films; nevertheless, he notes that definitive endings have become less common in Hollywood films today resulting from the wake of European art cinema (2007: 16-17). For one thing, it should be noted that story patterns and narratives in a broader sense are obviously similar within a genre, and yet individual films are far less predictable since “the paths to the climaxes and resolutions vary considerably” (Neale 2000: 209).

The setting of genre films, the physical time and space in which the narrative is placed is more dominant in some genres than in others (see Grant 2007: 14). A western is restricted to the Wild West, thus being limited to a temporarily and geographically specific period of time and place. Hence, the fixity of the setting functions as a conventional marker and just as well grants thematic weight. On the

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<sup>9</sup> “[...] all film genres treat some form of threat – violent or otherwise – to the social order” (Thomas Schatz qtd. in Grant, 2007: 16).

contrary, a musical, romance or thriller can take place virtually anywhere (see Grant 2007: 14). More significant settings are certainly found in the horror film and science fiction film employing isolated rural locations and castles in the former, and settings ranging from the present to the future as in the latter. No matter how distinct or minor the significance of the setting, the time and place of individual genres convey generic iconography. In Sobchack's words:

These places [...] do not change in the course of a film, and very little from film to film. The visual appearance of a western town in one film is just about the same as in other films. The landscape in a sci-fi picture can be depended upon. The world of the musical is always a glittering unreality poised somewhere between our doughty old world and heaven, whether it is set backstage at the Broadway Theatre or high in the Swiss Alps (108).

Characters in genre films are "recognisable types rather than psychologically complex" (Grant 2007: 17), and recognition and familiarity are achieved by means of iconographic elements (see Sobchack 108). Buscombe's suggestion of a film's outer forms (15-16), the clothes, tools and settings most certainly convey the character's function or role in the film in combination with his/her behaviour and action. Moreover, they define a genre through their presence such as the alien in sci-fi films, the monster in the horror film, the sheriff in the western, the law-abiding policeman in cop films; and again their functions are understood and perceived because we have seen these characters in previous films. Sobchack claims that the straightforward, direct characterization in genre films, inasmuch as their portrayal is stylised, hard-boiled, excessively emotional, tough or ruthless, enables viewers to identify more easily and strongly with their characters (108-109). Viewers associate with a character, while characters can just as well trigger and invoke emotion in the audience. Character action, behaviour and bits of dialogue most certainly insinuate audience reactions if we consider romance and weepies which will most likely elicit tears; horror films will trigger fear and alarm, thrillers will thrill and keep us in suspense, comedies will makes us laugh (see Lacey 2005: 53). Not only outer appearances in the form of clothes and character action contribute to familiarity and conventionalised elements, but also typecasting of specific actors have led to iconographic perception of individual genre films. Character actors have become familiar faces in familiar stories. Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly are always thought of in relation to the musical, John Wayne with the western (Grant 2007: 18). Arnold Schwarzenegger (1), Sylvester

Stallone (2), and Bruce Willis (3) are still strongly associated with their breakthrough roles in (1) *The Terminator* (1984), *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), *Terminator 3: Rise of The Machines* (2003); (2) *Rocky I* (1976), *II* (1979), *III* (1982), *IV* (1985), *V* (1990), *Rocky Balboa* (2006) and (3) *Die Hard* (1988), *Die Harder* (1990), *Die Hard: With A Vengeance* (1995), *Live Free or Die Hard* (2007), reprising the role of the Terminator, Rocky and John McClane, respectively, which gave weight to their appearance in other action films. Not only limited to sequels, many actors play variations of a type and are often cast in similar films within the same genre, consequently becoming an iconic actor. If we consider these three actors' appearances in comedies, for example, Schwarzenegger in *Twins* (1988) and *Kindergarten Cop* (1990), Stallone in *Oscar* (1991) and *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot* (1992) or Willis in *Death Becomes Her* (1992) and his appearance on TV's sitcom *Friends* (in 2000), their once established status of the action hero in a "new" and unconventional role most certainly adds to the comic effect.<sup>10</sup> When actors are cast against type, as Grant argues, films may have a different emotional impact on viewers which shows that "stars and genres reinforce each other". In a similar manner, he proceeds to mention that conventionalised patterns and icons allow for parody such as in the horror spoofs series *Scream* which depend upon its viewers' generic literacy (2007: 18-21). In this context, Sobchack argues that "one can parody the conventions, one can work against the conventions, one can use the conventions with great subtlety and irony" (113). He predominantly speaks of unconventional endings where resolution and restoration of order are denied and which in turn produce "agitation" and "discomfort" in the viewer (113).

### 1.3.3. Audience Perception

"Genres are dependent upon audiences for both their existence and meaning" (Grant 2007: 20).

Viewers have a certain set of expectations and hypotheses before and while viewing a film. Leaning on Ryall's genre film triangle mentioned above, institution and conventions provide the overall image which is perceived,

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<sup>10</sup> I have based the examples on Grant's comments on Schwarzenegger's iconographic casting and the "incongruity" of the "muscular actor" appearing in comedies (2007: 19).

recognized and understood by the audience. This activity of reading a film is closely tied to elements which are plausible and possible in individual genres.

In this context, Neale speaks of the notion of “verisimilitude”, which formulates this very system of recognition and understanding that renders intelligible and explicable elements in genre films (2000: 31). Simply put, if a character bursts into song as part of the narrative, viewers are likely to perceive the film as a musical. Hence it makes the otherwise unmotivated singing fittingly appropriate and viewers will expect more motivated acts of singing. Music and singing is not just probable but obligatory and is bound to occur in a musical. Moreover, verisimilitude obviously varies from genre to genre. As Neale exemplifies, bursting into song will be inappropriate and unbelievable in a war film or a thriller. The act of killing will occur in several genres but is unlikely to be included in a comedy (2000: 32). At this point, Neale draws a distinction between two types of “regimes of verisimilitude”; the generic and the cultural (2003: 161). Cultural verisimilitude is closely related to realism and the real world as presented on screen. In Neale’s view, some genres appeal more directly to the cultural aspect, employing authentic and authenticating discourses, artefacts and text as it occurs not only in the gangster films, war films, and cop films (2003: 162) but I would also add the biopic. While generic plausibility is least compatible with the cultural regimes of verisimilitude, Neale argues that these generic elements attract audiences to watch a film in the first place: singing in the musical, the appearance of the monster in the horror film, are elements which are known to some extent in advance upon which expectations and hypotheses are built (2003: 163). Consequently, cultural and generic elements are blurred. “Generic knowledge [becomes] a form of cultural knowledge” and hence a “component of public opinion” (see Neale 2003: 163).

Altman discusses three major aspects of generic spectatorship which is different to the cue-and-response process (1999: 145-146): Firstly, he proposes the idea of generic crossroads. Similar to Neale’s distinction of cultural and generic plausibility, Altman argues that all genre films incorporate a series of crossroads. These moments in the text offer two paths where one stands for a “culturally sanctioned activity or value, while the other path diverges from cultural norms in

favour of generic pleasure” (1999: 145). He exemplifies this point by discussing the gangster film, where illegal activities are important and necessary on the generic path. Culturally, crime should be disapproved of and condemned; as the main ingredient of this genre, however, and in the context of seeking out generic pleasure, the viewing activity leads to the “split characteristic of genre spectatorship. One side continues to judge as the culture has taught us to judge, while the other bases its judgments on generic criteria” (1999: 146). Secondly, speaking of “generic economy”, Altman points out that spectators’ activities in choosing either path, the highest level of generic pleasure is achieved when cultural values are denied. Viewers choose “crime over law”, “nonsense over communication”, “war over peace” and thus “undermine the very foundations of the culture limiting our free range – and that is precisely what pleases us” (1999: 155). Nevertheless, the abandonment of cultural and social norms is restored in the end when the film returns to cultural values. Simply put, taking the generic pleasure, viewers escape the real world during the length of the film’s screen time but the escape eventually leads to a strong desire to return to social norms. The monster is defeated, the villain captured, the couple gets married and lives happily ever after. In Altman’s view, the opposition of generic pleasure and eventual return to cultural values makes genre films successful and appealing to viewers who are literate and relish specific genres (1999: 156). Thirdly, Altman discusses the notion of the generic community, implying that fans of a certain genre build up “constellated communities” unified by a preference in choosing and watching particular films (1999: 161). Here, he differentiates between “frontal communication” and “lateral communication” within these communities; the former being direct experience of a film, whereas the latter constitutes exchanges between viewers and fans (1999: 162). Hence, genre films are not just passed on from producers to viewers but generate a movement of communication between groups of consumers. Genre fandom is expressed in several diverse ways if we consider the viewership of special screenings of, for example, *Star Wars* or *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, where viewers attend the show in costumes or sing along as in the latter case. As Grant notes, fans of horror films form a distinct subculture operating fan sites, bulletin boards and forums on the internet (2007: 21). Merchandising of film memorabilia and items has played its interactive role



as well, in order to push and satisfy the taste of fan groups. Altman strongly claims that marketing strategies including “stuffed animals”, “give-aways”, “action-figures”, and “novelized versions” have become an important part of defining generic insignia “permitting easy recognition among enthusiasts of the same genre” (1999: 160).

## 2. The Episodic Film & Genre

### 2.1. The Episodic Film – A Definition

Looking for a clear-cut definition, you encounter different proposals. James Monaco's glossary in the German edition of *Film and New Media* gives the following definition while the original English edition<sup>11</sup> does not contain any entry:

Episodenfilm: Ein Film, der mehrere in sich geschlossene Episoden eines oder mehrerer Regisseure enthält, die durch eine Gemeinsamkeit (Thema, Autor, Darsteller, Schauplatz, etc.) verbunden sind (2006: 58).

Pramaggiore just defines the adjective in terms of its employment in film:

Episodic: A non-standard narrative organization that assumes a "day in the life" quality rather than the highly structured three-act or four part narrative, and that features loose or indirect cause-effect relationships (2006: 402)

Treber puts it differently<sup>12</sup>:

The episodic film consists of individual narrative segments, self-contained in time and space without exerting any influence on another segment. This means that events and characters in one episode do not affect the course of action in another episode (17).

Bordwell discusses episodic films under the umbrella terms "forking path tales" and "network narratives" by outlining divergent structure compositions in comparison to the conventional narration:

All the constructive principles governing art cinema can be deployed in network tales too. These films can display loose causal connections, diffuse or abandoned goals, interplays of fantasy and reality, unreliable and ambiguous narration, inconclusive endings, and innovations in visual and auditory technique. (2008: 219)

As these definitions show, "episodic film" is considered in various ways with difficulties to cover the wide range of the format. In my view, episodic films are not always a chain of self-contained episodes, neither do they always present a "day in the life" story, nor do they end in forking paths, and recent examples such as *21 Grams* or *Babel* show that single events and actions in one episode do affect

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<sup>11</sup> *The Dictionary of Film and New Media*, 2<sup>nd</sup> printing, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> „Der Episodenfilm besteht aus einzelnen, zeitlich und räumlich in sich abgeschlossenen narrativen Segmenten, die auf der Handlungsebene keinen gegenseitigen Einfluss aufeinander nehmen können. Dies bedeutet, dass Ereignisse und Charaktere einer Episode nicht auf den Gang der Dinge einer anderen Episode einwirken können" (17).

another episode. A definition should probably be narrowed to the elementary bedrock of the format: episodic storytelling by means of presenting the story in episodes. The notion of “episodes” in this context, then, covers the short sketch presented in vignettes and ranges to more elaborate and lengthier storylines.

Considering Altman’s argument that classical Hollywood cinema borrowed narratives from novels and drama (1992: 25), episodic storytelling itself can be traced back to classical literature. To name a few examples, Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Boccaccio’s *Il Decamerone*, Scheherazade’s stories in the *The Arabian Nights*, all of which were made into films, are significantly structured into (self-contained) episodes within a frame narrative. Schnitzler’s drama *Reigen* contains ten scenes, linking one character to another in the subsequent scene, thus creating a circular structure. Character constellations where A knows B, B knows C is not uncommon in episodic films.

Starting with *Intolerance* (1916), which Lommel (123) and Treber (17) consider to be the first example of the format, episodic films have been produced throughout film history. Especially with the rise of independent cinema, as Bordwell (2008: 191) points out, filmmakers started to create innovative films which were different from the classical style. If we consider the previous discussions on genre and their dynamics of variation and change over time, Bordwell’s argues (2008: 191) that “network narratives” have come to adopt conventions of their own. Similar to the development of major genre films, fresh and new patterns against the norm were repeated until they became canonized and consequently conventionalized. Nevertheless, filmmakers and studios remained careful not to push the limits too far by mixing familiar strategies with novelties (see Bordwell 2008: 191). In the past decades, episodic films have experienced a revival with Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction* (1994) which in Lommel’s (124) view, owed much of its success to the episodic structure.

Two interesting aspects that assumedly contributed to the rise of the format are proposed by Lommel (127) and Bordwell (2008: 198):

The introduction of TV soap operas, popularized in the 1950s, has shaped viewers' perceptive skills. Episodic structure and serial presentation have trained the audience in their literariness for the format by demanding to follow multiple strings of events experienced by several character groups which is most certainly a central marker of episodic films. Their second argument is built upon the awareness of global connectivity, people's networking activities within specific cultural networks and the notion of "six degrees of separation", a catchphrase that any person is six steps away from any other person in the world. The idea of connectivity and re-connection of seemingly disconnected stories, characters or events, which is common in episodic films mirror cultural behaviour, knowledge and trends. In this context, cultural associations render intelligibility of films and provide a conventional tool in viewers' active reading of the film.

Such as the classically structured (Hollywood) genre film, episodic films make use of conventional narrative techniques, still, the overall presentation and in turn, the audience's activity is challenged in different ways.

## **2.2. Episodic Film as Genre?**

There has not been much discussion on episodic films as a genre per se. As opposed to the major genre categories, episodic films are admittedly diverse considering their narrative and content which most certainly posits some problems to subsume the type under the heading of a genre. A lack of iconographic elements adds to the problem to specifically provide a clear-cut generic category. There is no visible conventional outer and inner form. On the contrary, episodic films work significantly on structurally similar patterns, which are recurrently found when analysing several films. At this point, it could be remarked that structural patterns are the bedrock of all genre films considering the opposition of hero versus villain, crime versus justice, misjudged couples turning into lovers, mankind versus monster, who are at the centre of all action which unfolds from beginning to end. Nevertheless, I feel that episodic films have their own dynamics, their own rules and recognizable characteristic elements. As Derrida (228) points out, "a trait common to a generic class is precisely the identifiable recurrence of a common trait by which a membership in a class is or should be

recognized” and based on that trait one should decide questions of class-membership. In combination with Tudor’s claim that genre is what we (the viewer) believe it to be (7), as was outlined above, and considering the repetitive nature of episodic films I strongly argue that this type of film participates in its own class of genre. As with the classic genre films, the arrays of output of individual films are different and yet the films within that class remind us of something we have seen before.

Admittedly, episodic film as a generic category covers a variety of different films. As was mentioned before, ranging from the chain of short sketches, to more elaborate narratives, hybridisation often occurs dangling to place these films into different genre types. Both *Bobby* and *Vantage Point*, for example, deal with an assassination of the President of the United States. This central theme alone adheres to the generic element of the political thriller, which according to Derry (65), is a film organized around a plot to assassinate a political figure. These films may be “completely fictional” (as in *Vantage Point*) or “based on fact” (as in *Bobby* which dramatizes Robert F. Kennedy’s assassination in 1968) and may also include an “actual investigatory force often represented by a reporter narrating the revelations” (see Derry 65). My reason for not placing *Bobby* and *Vantage Point* into the political thriller genre is simply due to the dominant episodic character of both films. In the latter, the assassination occurs early at the beginning, in the former it marks the ending of the film. What happens from the assassination onwards and up to the assassination, respectively, is strikingly different to what would be expected of a classic thriller. Each episode in *Vantage Point* starts with the very same assassination cueing different character groups in each episode and their involvement shortly before and after the attack. *Bobby*, however, unfolds in several narrative strands all following different character groups during the time span of a day. Kennedy’s thematic presence is expressed through interviews in TV programs. His supporters and the protagonists’ recurring reference and excitement about his scheduled speech at the hotel thread the title character throughout the film, but the majority of the film’s plot deals with the 22 characters’ lives and struggles and suddenly ends with the assassination. The focus on the characters predominantly gives a portrait of contemporary society during Kennedy’s election campaign rather than a political thriller. Once again,

the significant episodic presentation, the overabundance of characters and the unconventional plot structure lessen generic impact of the political thriller and rather give more weight to the episodic feature of the film.

In the same manner, and to name only a few, I advocate that *I'm not There* is a biopic about different aspects and stages in Bob Dylan's life, *Babel* a drama spanning its plot over three different continents, dramatizing political and social issues, *Nine Lives* a melodrama excessively portraying the struggle of nine women, or *Love Actually* a romantic comedy with its love couples and happy ending. BUT the predominant characteristic always remains to be the episodic story pattern and I argue that the major recurring trait of the genre is the episodic structure, which is mixed with elements of other genre categories.

### 3. Structures

#### 3.1. The Classic (Hollywood) Structure

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines the “proper structure” of a plot:

[...] a whole is that which has beginning, middle, and end. A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end, on the contrary, is that which is naturally after something itself, either as its necessary or as its usual sequel, and with nothing else after it; and a middle is that which is by its very nature after one thing and has another after itself. A well constructed plot, therefore, must not begin or end at any random point; it must make use of beginning and end as just described. (15)

Aristotle’s pattern exacts a clear beginning, middle and end in a unified chain. In the domain of film studies, the classical narrative or interchangeably termed “the classical Hollywood style” roots in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the silent film era, technical means such as editing, lighting and set design were standardized and a formulation of storytelling norms facilitated the production of easily understandable, entertaining movies (Thompson 2003: 19)

Bordwell specifies the “classical narration” as follows:

The classical Hollywood film presents psychologically defined individuals who struggle to solve a clear-cut problem or to attain specific goals. In the course of this struggle, the characters enter into conflict with others or with external circumstances. The story ends with a decisive victory or defeat, a resolution of the problem and a clear achievement or nonachievement of the goals (1985: 157).

Following Aristotle’s pattern, screenwriters frequently deploy a three-act structure, sequencing act 1, presenting the situation and the characters, before act 2, showing characters employed in action or situations which point to conflicts or problems and finally before act 3, which comprises the resolution in a climax (Lehmann qtd in Boggs, 55 & Nash 3).

In Thompson’s (2001: 27-28) view, classical films are structured into 4 parts and an epilogue<sup>13</sup> which she defines as the setup, the complicating action, the development, and the climax with turning points functioning as transitions between each part. The set up introduces the initial situation, the protagonist and

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<sup>13</sup> Some sources speak of a “five-part dramatic structure” in terms of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement. The exposition covers everything preceding and including the inciting moment-the event or situation that sets the rest of the narrative in motion. The rising action covers the development of the action and moves towards a climax. The climax sets narrative’s turning point leading to the falling action which brings the events to conclusion and resolution in the denouement (Barsam 59).

his/her goals and motivations. The complicating action and the development which is, according to Bordwell, a “split-up” of the second act, offers the possibility to track the characters’ aims in more detail (2006: 36). As both Thompson and Bordwell argue, the protagonist might change his tactics in achieving his goals or face a “countersetup” in the complicating action (Thompson 2001: 28, Bordwell 2006: 36). The development then, presents the protagonist’s struggle to achieve his goal, often including incidents of suspense and delay. The end of the development points at the progress towards the climax which contains the resolution giving answers to questions of whether the goals will be achieved. The climax is followed by an epilogue which winds up the situation and settles the sub-plot (Bordwell 2006: 37-38).

In the same way, yet on a smaller scale, Bordwell outlines that scenes in a classical film are structured according to principles of linearity. A scene starts with an exposition, introducing characters in space and time, develops by means of character action, and ends by closing off prior developments or opening up new causal lines, for example, a dialog hook, which are picked up in the next scene (1985: 158). Structuring these small elements in a linear way contributes to the intelligibility of the whole sequence of the film.

Bordwell and Thompson analysed a wide range of classical movies according to the four-part structure, and strikingly, classical films contribute a balanced amount of time to each part of the movie; the outcome of their analysis shows an average of 20-30 minutes for each section depending on screen time (Thompson 2001: 36-42, Bordwell 2006: 36-40).

The four-part structure clearly points at the linear unity and the protagonist’s role in the progression of the story. As Thompson (2001: 20) points out, the focus on causality entails an unambiguous presentation of a unified narrative which cues a cause that leads to an effect, the effect, consequently, becoming a cause for another effect. These causes almost entirely arise from the character’s action or traits. Traits usually last throughout the film which means that classical narration presents characters who act and behave consistently from the beginning to the end. Thus, one common feature of virtually every classical film is the goal-



oriented protagonist, a character who desires something that consequently propels the narrative and defines the main lines of action (Thompson 2003: 21). Similarly, Altman points out, Hollywood cinema's "hermeneutic moves through character-based causality toward a logical conclusion" (1992: 26).

According to Cooper (88), the classical character addresses four basic audience needs: viewers want to feel and share universal emotions, observe specific character traits, and follow the character in struggle in order to eventually master the conflict in the final resolution. The audience bonds with the character and hence with the story. Since the classical structure usually follows one protagonist, minor characters serve as antagonists, friends, lovers in order to complete the world around the protagonist (see Cooper 90).

Two other features, inherent to the classical style, are the dual plotline and the incorporation of a deadline for the protagonist's action. Thompson claims that most classical films incorporate a romance into one of the plotlines, which is causally linked to the main plotline dealing with the protagonist's major goals. Deadlines provide a temporal stricture under which the protagonist should accomplish his goals; these may last across the film or only for a short while (Thompson 2001:16).

To sum up, the classical structure works on principles of clarity and unity whereupon a forward impetus is triggered by the protagonist's motivations and desire to achieve specific goals. The classical film has a clear initial situation (beginning) which develops (middle) into the climax (end). Cause and effect are logically ordered and usually result in resolving the initial situation. The goal-driven protagonist acting under restricted time in dual plotlines are three distinctly characteristic features of classical films

### **3.2. The Episodic Structure**

Different to the classical structure, the episodic structure does not present a clear-cut beginning-middle-and-end at the level of the whole film, as the plotline is frequently not presented in a linear progression. Still, it would be misleading to

define episodic films just in terms of non-linearity since some types are ordered in sequence, providing a yet restricted but linear structure. Moreover, non-linearity does not equal “episodic”. Despite the fact that the film is presented in reversed order, *Memento* is structured according to classical principles: Leonard trying to solve the mystery of his wife’s death – one goal-driven protagonist and his struggle to achieve his aim. In the same manner, it could be argued that *21 Grams* is not an episodic film but an anachronistically ordered classic structure taking into account that the story actually has a beginning, middle and end in the classic sense despite its jumps to and fro between past, present and future events. Nevertheless, *21 grams* employs characteristic features of episodic film which will be discussed in this chapter.

In principle, the episodic structure follows two basic modes of presentation; the sequential structure adjoins one episode after the other, whereas the interlocking structure cuts to and fro between episodes by means of cross-cutting or parallel montage<sup>14</sup>.

The sequential structure can be highly overt by showing several self-contained episodes which end before the beginning of the next one. Frequently they begin with the title of each episode which gives the overall impression of a chained up sequence of short films, or vignettes at the level of the whole film, such as in *Coffee & Cigarettes*, *Nine Lives*, *Things You Can Tell Just by Looking at Her* or *Four Rooms*. Depending on the film, a protagonist can function as a link between these rather separate episodes, adopting a role in each episode (such as the bellhop in *Four Rooms*, the man in *Things You Can Tell*, who is the colleague, the date and the chance acquaintance in three separate episodes); in *Paris Je T’aime*, which lines up 18 episodes in sequence, each being named after one of the city’s 18 boroughs, the ending scene shows protagonists of different episodes who happen to live across the street, who meet up in bars, walk in the same neighbourhoods, thus loosely connecting the individual episodes and placing them into a whole piece of work. The episodes in Jarmusch’s *Coffee & Cigarettes* (11

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<sup>14</sup> See also Lommel’s article „Überlegung zur Aktualität des Episodenfilms“ (2005) briefly discussing these two possible patterns.

episodes) or *Night on Earth* (5 episodes), in turn, are only linked by an overreaching theme, rendering coherence by means of stylistic devices, such as repetitive shots or similarity of each episode's structure.

Less overt sequential structure is evident in films where episodes are shown in sequence but function as parts of the whole film containing information which are essential for the overall outcome. In *11:14* (5 episodes) or *Vantage Point* (6 episodes), *The Red Violin* (5 episodes), *Smoke* (5 episodes), for example, each episode raises questions which are resolved to some extent in the subsequent episode. In contrast to the overt sequential structure, episodes are not lined up as self-contained stories but contribute to the whole film, placing each protagonist at the centre of his/her episode.

The interlocking structure presents several episodes throughout the film. *The Hours*, for example, consists of Virginia Woolf's episode, Laura Brown's episode and Clarissa Vaughan's episode. All three storylines start right at the beginning and span across the film in alternation up to the end. The same applies to *Short Cuts*, *Magnolia*, *Sad Movie* and *Love Actually* where episodes are continuously shown in interlocking mode. Transitions and links between different episodes are marked by stylistic means such as (non-)diegetic music and sound, repetitive and similar shots, the mise-en-scène or lines of dialog. The film analysis in chapter 6 will discuss some transitions in interlocking episodic films in more detail.

In both types, the sequential and interlocking structure, the attention is directed to several plotlines which unfold in several episodes with several protagonists who are sometimes causally linked by coincidence (an accident, an assassination), an object (a violin, a book), a certain setting (a city, a store), mutual friends or by an overreaching theme; the extent to which character relations are revealed depend on the individual film's story and the necessity to pursue converging lines of action at the level of the whole. Characters may cross in separate story lines or remain unknown to each other; the protagonist of one episode may appear as a minor character in another episode but always keeping the respective protagonist in the centre of action and attention. Similarly one plotline may or may not affect another plotline.

The focus on each episode grants equal dominance to all characters, which highlights a striking contrast to the classical feature film. Significantly, in-depth character portrayals, subplots and minor characters are rarely deployed and not developed in more detail. In multiple-protagonist films such as *Nashville*, *Short Cuts*, *Magnolia* or *Love Actually* the viewer gets a glimpse of character traits which are often sketched out in stereotypes. This is frequently achieved, for example, through placing opposing character groups in the story – such as the alcoholics Doreen and Earl Piggot against the middle-class Finnigan couple in *Short Cuts*; or the former and the present child prodigies in *Magnolia*, who both have to struggle against their dominant counterparts in persona of their boss or their father, respectively. Since characters' actions in a storyline are infrequently pursued, it has the effect of leaving gaps in the story that deny a satisfying resolution and restoration of order. Bordwell (2008: 199) feels that the missing unity of a classical plotline in network narratives and the absence of the conventional goal-driven character activity are frequently replaced by patterns of relationship between characters. The crucial activity of the viewer is to understand relations and affiliations between characters in different episodes from the very beginning in order to grasp the overall meaning. For Bordwell, these character relations constitute the basic element of episodic films which raises questions like “who is related to whom?” and “who is working for whom?” which in turn challenges the viewer to create an abstract structure based on character constellation (199). Truly, multi-layered films such as *Short Cuts*, *Bobby* or *Magnolia*, crammed with multiple character arcs, demand the viewer's activity to construe such patterns in the very beginning of the film. Nevertheless, these social patterns often provide surprising moments upon realizing that two completely unrelated character arcs happen to be relatives, neighbours, colleagues or friends.

To return to my argument that *21 grams* is an episodic film, its three storylines including each protagonist are given equal dominance. Ex-convict Jack causes a car accident which kills Cristina's family and loosely connects her to Paul, who receives her husband's donor heart. Though the plotlines converge within the first half of the film, I argue that in a classic sense, the film would be either about Jack's struggle to adjust to social norms and his fanatic faith in Jesus Christ which

helps him to overcome his criminal past, or Cristina's struggle to readjust her life after her family's tragic accident which is marked by alcoholism and drug abuse, or Paul's unhappy marriage and his critical health condition. The plot, however, interweaves these three storylines and dramatizes each character's progression in equal ways. The plotlines are causally linked by the accident early in the beginning and diverge from three distinct episodes into two as Paul and Cristina mutually plan their revenge for Jack's hit-and-run.

As Treber (22) notes, the non-linearity of episodic storytelling and the overabundance of plotlines and protagonists frequently result in confusion and disorder and he argues that connotative and stylistic techniques are essential to the format. In his view, the missing perspective of one dominant perspective entails the need to connect episodic fragments by employing narrative strategies such as unifying themes, recurring variations of motifs and narrative strands as well as acoustic transitions between scenes (23).<sup>15</sup>

The features which connect episodes and in my view constitute the genre markers of episodic film will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>15</sup> „Die Abwesenheit der weitgehend dominanten Erlebnisperspektive einer einzigen verbindlichen Identifikationsfigur führt vielmehr dazu, dass episodisch zersplitterte Handlungen im ausgleichenden Gegenzug durch einen Rahmen erzählerischer Strategien und Prinzipien wie vereinheitlichende Themen, wiederkehrende Standardsituationen, Variationen einiger weniger Motive und Handlungskonflikte sowie fließende akustische Szenenübergänge zusammengehalten werden“ (Treber, 23)

## 4. Establishing Narrative Networks

To discuss episodic films as an independent genre, it is obviously a necessity to outline its specific codes and traits. What are the recurring features and sets of identifiable characteristics that constitute the genre? Apart from the episodic structure, what, then, are the conventions and genre markers on which we could base a discussion of class-membership?

As the only source naming characteristic features of episodic films, Lommel outlines four elementary aspects which are employed in the narrative structure of episodic films: simultaneity, inclusion of (different) times and places, multiple-perspectives, and chains of cause-and-effect, all of which may occur in combination (130). I would like to add the features of coincidence, chance, similarity and repetition. Admittedly, all of these features can be found in the classical structure and yet in combination with the episodic modes of presentation they attract diverse possibilities at the level of narration.

In my view, the episodic structure, which was outlined in chapter 3, in combination with these features constitute the genre markers of episodic films. These features, however, are not simply part of a film's story and plot, but I additionally consider them as essential elements in joining and connecting separate episodes, thus placing them into a coherent piece of work. The following sections will outline these recurring features with examples taken from my selection of films.

### 4.1. Simultaneity

This feature is quite common in episodic films, suggesting that separate episodes and storylines develop simultaneously within the structure of the whole movie. Its occurrence can be traced in the sequential structure as well as in the interlocking structure. *Night on Earth*, *Vantage Point* and *11:14*, to name three sequential examples, show each episodes' events as they happen at the same time. The similarity in all three films is a shot of the exact time at the beginning of each episode, either stylistically by means of superimposed digits in the frame or

through the mise-en-scène where clocks are shown in close-ups. In *Night on Earth*, simultaneity works without a storyline affecting another storyline, and it is simply suggested that in L.A, N.Y., Paris, Rome, and Helsinki, a conversation in a cab happens to take place at the same time. *Vantage Point* and *11:14* on the contrary, assign each episode with important narrative information for the whole story. Hence, in the latter two examples protagonists in their own storyline have overlapping scenes with another episode. While protagonist A experiences his events, protagonist B follows different aims until their paths cross at some point which is once shown from A's perspective and in another episode from B's perspective. Thus, simultaneous presentation of action always includes scenes we have seen before. *Vantage Point's* narrative structure consists of 6 sequential episodes with its kernel event being the assassination of the U.S President during a summit in Salamanca. The central event is shown early during the first episode (the news report team's episode) and from there on each episode starts out again at noon, always adding some pieces of information about the attack. While the news team is reporting live on site, the Secret Service agent is getting ready for the summit, the Spanish policeman hands over a bomb to one of the members of a terrorist group, an American tourist films the scene of the summit, the President is being exchanged for a double and the terrorist group get themselves prepared. From the first scenes introducing each group of protagonists, the episode follows only their line of action. Similarly *11:14* tells its story following the pattern of simultaneity. Unlike *Vantage Point*, the film begins with the episode closest to 11:14, the time where all 5 lines of action run in parallel and unrolls its story in reverse order, having each episode begin a little further back in time.

In interlocking types of episodic films, the feature of simultaneity is used to set the time and space of the narrative and, moreover, to introduce all character groups early on significantly implying that all of their action is happening at the same time. *Short Cuts*, *Magnolia*, *Sad Movie*, *Love Actually*, for example, suggest that all storylines evolve simultaneously, unfolding each episode's story in alternating shots. In all three films, parallel action is presented by recurring use of TV or radio programs followed by several groups of characters in different episodes. Elements of natural disaster and climatic conditions inserted into the narrative also add to the feature of simultaneity. The earthquake marking the end

of *Short Cuts*, the symbolic frog rain in *Magnolia*, the continuous reference to the weather in *Sad Movie* and hence the characters' according reaction positions them in the same place and time.

In the sequential structure, simultaneity is created by reprising the same events over and over again from different perspectives, while the interlocking structure aims at the effect by using jump cuts to and fro different episodes, held together by the setting, lines of dialog, and (non-) diegetic music and sounds. We see the attack in *Vantage Point* six times, the crash which ends *11:14* is shown three times; in both films the event is presented from a different viewpoint and angle every time. The frog rain at the end of *Magnolia* cues a sequence of jump cuts alternating between all character groups. In the same manner, the introductory sequence in *Short Cuts* employs jump cuts between all character groups held together by sound bridges, a TV broadcast, and recurring shots of the helicopters spraying medfly poison.

#### **4.2. (Different) Times & Places**

Some films span their story across times and/or places, structurally assigning each episode to a specific time and place as it were. *The Red Violin* is a wide-stretching example as the film is structured into five episodes covering 17<sup>th</sup> century Cremona, 18<sup>th</sup> century Vienna, 19<sup>th</sup> century Oxford, 20<sup>th</sup> century Shanghai and 21<sup>st</sup> century Montreal. The frame narrative tells the story of the Red Violin as a prophecy from an old maid which links all five episodes causally. Similarly, *The Hours* is set in 1923 Sussex, 1951 Los Angeles and 2001 New York causally linked by Virginia Woolf's novel and a crossing of the latter two storylines at the end of the film. *Women Love Women* is set in 1961, 1972 and 2000 tracing the residents of the very same house. *Babel*, in turn combines the feature of simultaneity with different places. The film is structured into three different interlocking storylines set in Morocco, San Diego & Mexico and Tokyo. Two young goatherds in Morocco try to test a rifle which was given to them to protect their father's herd from jackals. Aiming at a moving bus, they accidentally shoot an American tourist, severely wounding her. The tourist is on vacation with her husband, having left their two kids in San Diego with their Mexican nanny. The



nanny takes the kids to her son's wedding in Mexico in her nephew's car. On the way back to San Diego, her nephew, still intoxicated from the wedding party trespasses the U.S. border and abandons his aunt with the children in the middle of the desert. These two storylines alternate with the deaf-mute Japanese girl's episode who sees a TV news broadcast about the two Moroccan boys, which is considered a terrorist attack on the news. It turns out that her father, a former hunter, had given the rifle to a Moroccan farmer at the end of a successful hunting trip and hence connects all three storylines. The way the film orders separate events in different storylines adds to the simultaneous effect. While the couple is struggling in Morocco, the Mexican and Japanese episodes unfold at the same time.

To tie up the feature of times and places, I recurrently discovered that objects and themes serve as linking elements in order to connect separate episodes and storylines. The red violin, Woolf's novel, the house and the rifle are certainly linking objects; nevertheless, each film strongly employs an overreaching theme: the mystery about the red violin and its force upon its owners, the theme of homosexual love during the course of time, the loneliness and (un-) successful strive for happiness and perfection, and the impact and effects of (mis-) communication.

In a narrowed sense, these feature may also be assigned to all films significantly employing the feature of one place such as *Amores Perros*, set in Mexico City or *Smoke* which predominantly limits its place to a neighbourhood in Brooklyn where Auggie, the tobacco shop keeper is the central linking protagonist; similarly, the bellhop in *Four Rooms* links all four episodes which unfold in the restricted setting of a hotel. In the same way, all episodes in *Bobby* are set in the same hotel, thematically being connected by Robert Kennedy's election campaign.

In my view, the feature of time and place strongly demands a linking element in order to construct a coherent piece of work. First of all, taking into account that all episodes are equally dramatized, a missing link would not justify a jump from place A to B and most certainly not a jump over centuries as in *The Red Violin*. To take another example from *Babel*, the first two storylines are connected early in the film by revealing the relation of the protagonists in two distant places. The

third one, however, is not revealed until shortly before the ending, which leaves open how the Japanese episode is causally worked into the film. No matter how narrow or wide-stretched, a linking device most certainly connects separate episodes within the context of the film.

### **4.3. Multiple Perspectives**

Films such as *Vantage Point*, *Rashomon* or *Pulp Fiction* develop from a trigger event which links different character groups in the film. These films employ the feature of multiple perspectives by telling the story from different viewpoints. The robbery early in the beginning of *Pulp Fiction* is reprised in the end as seen from Vincent and Winnifield's viewpoint. The trial in *Rashomon* sequences five different characters' perspectives of the samurai's murder. The woodcutter who found the dead samurai, the monk who was the last to see him alive, Tajomaru, the Samurai's wife, and a shaman reporting the dead samurai's perspective give an account of the events which all present a different version of the story. Each account constituting an episode is shown in flashbacks with the result that Tajomaru claims to have killed the samurai himself, the wife claims to have killed her husband and the samurai claims to have committed suicide. The film denies a solution to reveal the progression of the story from an objective viewpoint and instead suggests that one event may be seen in different ways by different people. In *Vantage Point* the use of subjective viewpoints is employed in a different way. Each of its six episodes provides a different protagonist's perspective in telling the story. The beginning sequence in each episode includes the plaza of Salamanca, one of the main settings in the film. Depending on the protagonist we get different viewpoints of the plaza which establish the setting for the viewer. Thus, the first episode is presented from the perspective of the broadcast team starting out with aerial shots of the plaza and a voice-over of a news reporter setting the scene and giving out information about the summit which is about to start. All images in the first episode are predominantly shown on the screen of the mobile news studio, significantly limiting the perspective to one viewpoint. In contrast to all subsequent episodes, the news team's perspective remains to be the most objective, as other episodes are told through the perspective of a Secret

Service agent who is mainly focused on the crowd or from the viewpoint of a tourist capturing sights and local people with his handheld camera.

Perspectives and viewpoints of events experienced by different protagonists are closely linked to subjectivity at the level of each episode's story. In *The Five Senses*, for example, the disappearance of a little girl threads through the film. All five protagonists are in some ways affiliated with the girl. Depending on their relation, the disappearance is interwoven into each episode's main storyline to a greater or lesser extent. In a similar way, "What Do Kids Know?" a TV quiz show that threads through *Magnolia* triggers different protagonist reactions. For Stanley, the child prodigy, appearing on the show is the only way to receive his father's attention while for Donny, the child prodigy of times past, the show constantly brings back his inability to cope with adulthood. For Claudia, the daughter of the host, the show stirs up her hatred towards her father. These three protagonists' perspectives generate subjective associations with the show which are part of their storylines, whereas for all other protagonists the show remains to be of minor importance.

#### **4.4. Cause-and-Effect**

The feature of cause-and-effect allows for developing different variants of a story. In Lommel's view, episodic films frequently use ideas of alternative stories, variations, possibilities and parallel worlds (135)<sup>16</sup>. In this context, it should be distinguished from the cause-and-effect notion that functions as the forward impetus in the classical structure. More likely, as a feature of episodic films, it poses the questions "what would happen, if...?"

*Sliding Doors* is based on two alternative stories unfolding what would never ever happen if Helen missed the underground. Right after the exposition the doors to the train open up a parallel world which has her catching Gerry cheating on her in one storyline, whereas the other develops from Helen still being Gerry's girlfriend. Either way, similar things happen in both storylines in different order. The separation from Gerry early in the movie is reprised in the parallel world at

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<sup>16</sup> „Episodenfilme spielen häufig mit alternativen Geschichten, Varianten, Variationen, Potentialitäten, Parallelwelten – dem Möglichkeitssinn“ (Lommel 135)

the end, while the new boyfriend in the parallel world remains unknown to her in the main world until the last scenes. Both storylines are shown in alternation making a clear distinction between them through Helen's changed looks.

The pattern in *Lola rennt* is marked by different possibilities and variations of the same story. All three episodes unfold from the same outset when Lola has to raise 100.000 DM to save her boyfriend's life. Lola's run from home to her father's bank and finally to the meeting point remains the same in all three episodes. The contact with other characters during her run, however, offer different possibilities concerning the outcome of the story where Lola dies in episode 1, her boyfriend dies in episode 2 and episode 3 closes with a happy ending.

In this context, Lommel points out that "episodic films frequently offer the feature of chance acquaintances that affect and influence the character's life"<sup>17</sup>. In a slightly different way, Roser (8) compares *Lola rennt* with a computer game, where Lola has three different lives to complete the game.

#### **4.5. Chance and Coincidence**

In the prologue of *Magnolia*, a voice-over narrator gives three exemplary accounts of chance and coincidence which have no direct connection to any of the characters but rather hint at the overall design of the film: In 1911, Sir Godfrey, a resident of Greenberry Hill, is murdered by three men named Green, Berry and Hill. In 1983, a blackjack dealer is killed in an accident by a pilot who had lost a huge sum at his gambling table a couple of days earlier. In 1958, a young boy trying to commit suicide jumps off the roof. During his fall, he is accidentally shot by his mother who had been threatening her father with a shotgun. The idea of coincidence and chance which links different character arcs in *Magnolia* is taken up again in the epilogue where the same narrator says "there are stories of coincidence and chance and intersections and strange things told..." *Magnolia's* storylines spread over the Gator family, Partridge family and Spector family, Officer Jim and Donnie Smith when all protagonists are linked at some point in the film by coincidence.

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<sup>17</sup> „Der Episodenfilm weist oftmals Zufallsbegegnungen auf, die das Leben der jeweiligen Figuren beeinflussen und [...] schwerwiegend beeinträchtigen“ (Lommel 135).

I strongly argue that the feature of coincidence and chance is the most significant linking element in episodic films. In this context, it is basically limited to characters in the story. This occurs in loose ways such as in *New York, I Love You* where separate characters reappear in different episodes meeting other characters by chance, and which has no other effect on each episode's progression. They happen to meet on the street, in coffee shops, share cabs or move around in the same neighbourhood, which establishes a network based on character connections. In *New York, I love You* these coincidental sequences are shown between separate episodes and thus connect its self-contained storylines and place them into the context of the whole film. In a similar way, *Nine Lives* is patterned according to this feature, employing various reappearances in separate episodes which has a surprising effect and establishes a close-knit network of character constellations. The officer in episode 1 reappears in episode 3, being accused by his daughter Holly of sexual abuse. Holly reappears in episode 8 as the nurse of Camille who is treated by Lorna's mother from episode 6. Lorna in episode 6 happens to meet Lisa who was hosting her friends with her husband Damien in episode 4 and Damien happened to meet his ex-girlfriend in episode 2. In *Nine Lives*, chance and coincidence have no significant influence on an episode's storyline and simply link all of its nine self-contained episodes by means of reappearing characters. In a different way, chance and coincidence are employed in *Short Cuts* or *Amores Perros*. In *Short Cuts*, a crossing between Doreen Pigott and Casey Finnigan, for example, is a turning point in the Finnigan storyline when Casey succumbs to his injuries after an accident caused by Doreen. Both storylines are not connected in any other way. The accident is a minor event in Doreen's episode, inasmuch as she remains unaware of Casey's death which becomes the central tragedy for Casey's parents. In *Amores Perros*, three episodes are linked when three different groups of protagonists happen to be at the scene of an accident. In this sense, a central event, which happens to be perceived by several character arcs, connects individual storylines which may be related to a greater or lesser extent.

#### 4.6. Repetition and Similarity

In my view, repetition and similarity are two different important linking elements which connect episodes lacking definite causal connections. Whereas coincidence and chance is more related to character constellation, I argue that repetition and similarity is more concerned with the visual presentation of individual films. The use of repetitive shots, sounds, or structural similarities of separate episodes is frequently employed to place disconnected stories into the context of a whole film. Especially films built upon chains of disconnected episodes such as *Coffee & Cigarettes*, *Night on Earth* or *Nine Lives* present episodes in a strikingly repetitive and similar way.

*Coffee & Cigarettes* contains a chain of eleven separate self-contained episodes. The self-referential title threads through all episodes and constitutes the main line of action, as all protagonists are employed in drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes. In a significant manner, the words “coffee” and “cigarettes” are part of the dialog in a highly repetitive way. Episode 8, which lacks the spoken word “cigarettes” in the protagonists’ dialog, makes use of a cigarette vending machine in the mise-en-scène where the graphic presentation of the word covers the gap in the dialog. The film does not only employ repetition of sound but also makes use of repetitive frames as each episode contains a full shot of the coffee table, capturing cups, ash trays and cigarettes. Similarly, each episode in *Night on Earth* starts out in an almost identical way. We are given the time of the respective city when the camera zooms in on a clock that dissolves into a globe. The camera zooms into a spot on the globe marking the city where the following episode is set and the frame dissolves into the first shot of the episode. In *Nine Lives*, each episode is titled after its protagonist’s name given out in superimposed letters. Apart from this visual similarity, each narrative is structurally similar as all episodes are excessively melodramatic, presenting the protagonists’ struggle in five minutes of screen time. Tension and emotions are built up and all of a sudden a black frame ends each episode, denying any solution, resolution nor giving out information about the story’s further development.

As these three examples showed occurrences of repetition and similarity at the level of each episode, repetition and similarity are also frequently employed in episodic films which have a distinct transition sequence between episodes. In

11:14, the first four episodes end with a montage sequence of shots showing the most important events of the preceding episode in reverse order. The non-diegetic music is the same in all transitions, which end with a bell sound and a jump cut to the first frame of the subsequent episode. Similarly, the transitions in *Vantage Point* at the end of an episode show a sequence of fast backwards motion, incorporating all important images of the episode and complemented by the same non-diegetic sound track. In *Lola rennt*, the transitions at the end of episode 1 and 2 employ almost identical shot types, colour composition and a dissolve into a reddish flashback sequence. Depending on the outcome of the story where either Lola or Mannie dies, Lola takes over a central part in transition 1 whereas Mannie is the central character in transition 2.

The film analysis will discuss how these features are visualised in a selection of different films applying the tools of film narratology.

## 5. Narratology and Film

In *The Critical Eye* (1993), the authors note that early film criticism compared film with the study of language, inasmuch that words would be replaced by shots and sentences by shot sequences; the combination of shots and sequences would eventually produce meaning. Although film studies had been mainly focused on the visual quality of the cinema, film analysis gradually came to aim at “the objective [...] to break the work down into its component parts, to then look carefully at those parts, and to place each into a larger context – shots within the sequence, the sequence within the whole film” (143). This could be considered a fairly structuralist approach, since the main interest was to discover underlying structures of individual items in order to place them in a greater context. As Lacey (2005: 157) points out, structuralism and its sub-branch semiotics and semiology, the science of signs enabled film theorists to define the overreaching structure of film language by analysing the structures of individual pieces of work. Wollen (93) argues in a similar way, but emphasises the importance of pointing out differences and oppositions by claiming that, how “texts can be studied not only in their universality (what they all have in common) but also in their singularity (what differentiates them from each other)”.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the fact that film predominantly operates on a visual level, by “showing” rather than “telling” its stories, film-texts follow the same principles of story and plot which can be analysed by means of narrative concepts. Thus, Deleyto (218) strongly argues that “for a narrative theory to be consistent and complete it must work when applied to languages other than that of the novel. Most importantly in our culture, it must work when applied to the study of a film narrative”. Lommel (129) points out that narratology adopts a helpful approach to the study of episodic films, since episodic narration has had a long tradition in the field of literature. Branigan (34) defines the essential tasks of a narrative theory as one to “specify the various stages through which a film is perceived and comprehended as a narrative”.

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<sup>18</sup> In *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, Peter Wollen performed a close survey of Howard Hawkes’ action movies and contrasted the ideas and themes to Hawke’s comedies.



Considering the different mode of presentation between written works and film, narrative concepts obviously will have to be adapted in order to be applied to the discussion of film. Nevertheless, many study books on narratology contain sections about the analysis of film-texts. Concepts such as a narrator and focalization or point of view from which a story is told can be transposed to film narratology but in adapted form. Especially the concept of a narrator has caused much dispute in film analysis. Bordwell and Branigan reject the idea of a narrator for film analysis; in Branigan's view, personified narrators may be "swallowed up in the overall narrational process of the film, which they do not produce" (quoted in Bordwell 1985: 61). Bordwell's (1985: 62) attitude, that the filmic narrator is "the product of specific organizational principles" in accordance with the "viewers' mental sets" has been challenged by Chatman (1990: 132), who strongly argues that films are mediated through a narrative agent which he defines as the "cinematic narrator" – a transmitting agent of the narrative which should not be mistaken for the creator, the physical persona of a director. Jahn (F4.1.2.) offers the notion of a "filmic composition device (FCD)", a concept, which is not limited to a narrator but subsumes all arrangement of information which contribute to telling or showing the film's narrative. Deleyto (221) offers an appealing combinative solution by suggesting that "where there is narration in a novel, there is narration, focalization and representation in film". For the present survey, I will employ the basic categories of the off-screen narrator, the voice-over narrator and the on-screen narrator (see Jahn F4.2.1). Similar to novels, film-narratives can be structured into several narrative levels. Hence, the narrator can be a full-fledged character in a "homodiegetic narrative" or function as a narrator absent from the story in a "heterodiegetic narrative" (Jahn F4.2.3.).

Focalization is a concept formulated by Genette, where a focalizer is in the centre of a narrative text from whose perspective the story is told.<sup>19</sup> Branigan notes that "focalization displays a character's viewpoint in relation to the events of the character's world" (102). External focalization shows character awareness but from outside the character. In film, this is frequently expressed by means of the

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<sup>19</sup> Genette distinguished between three major types of focalization in "Mood" (161-211), the fourth chapter of his *Narrative Discourse* (1980). (1) Zero Focalization, occurs when the narrator says more than any of the characters know; (2) internal focalization, when the story is presented from the viewpoint of a character, and (3) external focalization, when the narrator says less than the character knows. (189).

“semi-subjective eyeline match” (Branigan 103), where the viewer sees what a character looks at from a slightly different spatial position. Nonetheless, it has to be inferred that what the audience has seen correlates with what the character has seen (see Branigan 103). Hence, external focalization is more objective while internal focalization is more subjective and “ranges from simple perception, to impressions, and to internal states of mind” (Branigan103). Deleyto places the following argument:

Whereas in the novel two kinds of focalization (internal/external) alternate, in film several internal and external focalizers can appear simultaneously at different points inside or outside the frame, all contributing to the development of the narrative and the creation of a permanent tension between subjectivity and objectivity (217).

If we consider internally focalized passages such as dreams, memories or hallucinations and the ways in which they are presented in novels, these sequences are most certainly different to the visualisation in film. Films can easily show subjective passages as seen from an internal focalizer, but the focalizer is usually not visible on screen (see Deleyto 225). At this point then, a switch to external focalization, for example, showing a close-up of a character’s eyes intensify the subsequent subjective, internally focalized sequence from where the character is visually absent. Deleyto names four main techniques which are frequently used in establishing internal focalization in film: editing, framing, camera movement and mise-en-scène (227). Jahn proposes five types of shots expressing focalization in film: a gaze shot shows a character looking at something which is usually followed by a point of view shot (POV) revealing the object of the characters’ gaze. A sequence of these two shot in combination is referred to as the eye-line shot or match cut. An over-the-shoulder-shot assumes the viewing position of a character and a reaction shot shows a character’s reaction (see Jahn 4.3.8.)

In the film analysis, I will discuss selected sequences considering their shot types, editing and sound techniques which all contribute to the visualization of the characteristic features outlined in chapter 4.

## 6. Film Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyse the visualization of the characteristic features discussed in chapter 4 by outlining how shot types, camera movement, editing and sound all contribute to express these features.

Jahn lists four central types of shots: the close-up (CU – usually capturing a human face), medium shot (MS – capturing the upper half of a person's body), full shot (FS – capturing the full view of a person) and long shot (LS – providing the view from a distance to capture buildings, for example) and intermediate types such as the extreme CU and extreme LS (see Jahn F2.1.). If these shot types may be assigned to a static camera position, a moving camera would produce “dynamic shots” such as a pan (camera moving around its vertical or horizontal axis), tilt (camera moving up or down), zoom, dolly shot (camera moving on a cart) or crane shot (camera moving on a crane) (see Kasdan 36-39).

Everything that is captured in a shot, including the setting, props, actors and lighting is defined as the *mise-en-scène*, which means everything visible on screen can have “symbolic overtones” that affect the viewer's reading of a scene (see Kasdan 49).

Individual shots are sequenced through editing and are closely related to the concept of order. According to Kasdan, “rhythm and pace, unity of space and time, and visual and aural relationships are developed through editing” (88). As stated by Villarejo (53) the five types of editing which are “the cut, dissolve, fade, wipe and iris” serve different functions in different contexts, both within the system of continuity editing associated with the narrative form of classical Hollywood cinema and other cinematic contexts. The fade, wipe and iris technique are based on optical effects and as Jahn (F2.4.) notes, types of editing usually “signal a change of scene”, a “temporal and/or spatial re-orientation” operating as “transitional cuts”. The fade-out marks the end of a shot, darkening the image to a black screen, which is usually followed by a fade-in to the next shot. A wipe replaces a shot through a continuous left-right or top-bottom introduction of the following shot, whereas the dissolve shortly superimposes the images from the preceding and the following shot (see Jahn F2.4.).

Chatman and Villarejo discuss three major categories of sound: speech, music, and noise (see Chatman 1990: 134, Villarejo 53). These categories are perceived

on the diegetic level, which means from a source which is visible in the particular frame in contrast to the non-diegetic level where sounds originate outside of the diegesis. Chatman (1990: 134) claims that non-diegetic sounds create mood and atmosphere which may have a “commentarial function”. Kasdan (122) underlines that music “sometimes functions as narration, imitating the action and giving information which [stir up] emotions, provokes responses and sets up psychological associations”. Other techniques employing sound are the voice-over, the off screen sound and the ambient or background sound. Voice-over is used to incorporate an invisible narrator or as a means of expressing inner feelings and thoughts of characters. The off screen sound is diegetic sound where the sound source is temporarily invisible. This may be the case during a dialogue where the speaker is only perceived through his words while the listener is shown in the frame (see Jahn F.3.2.) Ambient or background sound is also part of the diegesis which “provide information about the place, characters, and actions completing the visual experience” (Kasdan 140). A bleed-over or overlapping sound defines sound “anticipated from the next scene” or “lagging behind the previous scene” which may function as transitions from one scene to another (see Jahn F.3.2.)

The sequences for analysis are taken from *Short Cuts*, *Magnolia*, *The Red Violin*, *The Hours*, *Vantage Point*, *11:14*, *Amores Perros*, *New York, I Love You*, *Babel*, and *Women Love Women*. These films are first of all marked by their episodic structure, and in my view, dominantly employ one of the characteristic features. The discussion will show that these features frequently occur in combination and in addition it will be outlined how separate episodes and storylines are connected.

### **6.1. Simultaneity in *Short Cuts* and *Magnolia***

In both films, the feature of simultaneity threads throughout the film suggesting that all storylines unfold at the same time. This is achieved by employing specific stylistic tools (mise-en-scène, shot types, camera movement, editing, voice-overs and non-diegetic music) or narrative elements such as the medfly plague and the earthquake in *Short Cuts*, or the weather reports in *Magnolia*.

*Short Cuts* tells the story of 9 different character groups within a short span of time in interlocking mode of presentation. The example for analysis is taken from the introductory sequence alongside the opening credits of the film, where all character groups are captured in different places (and yet in the same city):

1. Finnigan Family: at home
2. Wyman couple: at a concert with the Kane couple
3. Kane couple
4. Kaiser Family: at home
5. Bush couple: at a jazz club
6. Shepard Family: at home
7. Piggot couple: at work
8. Trainer family: at work
9. Weathers family

In this sequence, simultaneity is first of all expressed by means of recurring shots of helicopters spraying medfly poison alternating with shots of characters suggesting the same place and time. In addition, the same news program followed by four character groups implies simultaneity:



Fig. 1



Fig.2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

The film begins with an aerial shot of a city by night (Fig. 1). The camera pans to the right and pulls back on an information board (Fig. 2). Unidentifiable, non-diegetic sound evolves into the whirring of helicopter blades. After a cut, the diegetic sound of rain turns out to be above the camera. From a cut back to the information board, the camera pans to the medfly poison being sprayed by the helicopters. The camera tilts up and captures the helicopters in a low angle as they fly past, then tracking the helicopters (Fig. 3). Non-diegetic music starts with this shot in addition to the diegetic sounds of the helicopters. Cut to an aerial shot of a limousine. Superimposed letters whirr into the frame to form the title of the film. The

diegetic sound from the previous shot has become non-diegetic (Fig. 4). When the full title is shown on the screen, a cut captures the helicopters in a straight-on angle as they fly towards the camera while the camera remains in a stationary position. The non-diegetic music overweighs the diegetic sound of the helicopters. During this take, the cast is listed in superimposed letters. At the end of the take, the helicopters are out of focus, and the diegetic sound is as clear as the non-diegetic music (Fig. 5). The following cut sets out the introduction of Earl Piggot.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Cut to the aerial shot of the limousine. From a high angle, the camera captures the limousine in a tracking shot (Fig. 6).

A bleed-over sound of a news report (Voice-over: Time has come...) is followed by a cut revealing the source of the diegetic sound inside the limousine on a TV set in shot ?. The camera remains static in this slightly high angle shot of the TV screen (Fig. 7).

On-screen: ... to go to war again. Not with Iraq or what was once Yugoslavia but with the medflies.

Cut to a CU of Earl from behind. In the same take Earl turns around (Fig. 8).

Off-screen: ... a potentially devastating insect...

In an eyeline match we see the couple in the back captured in a slightly high-angle MS as seen from Earl's heightened seating position (Fig. 9).

On-screen: ... that has chosen to make California its new home.

Cut back to Earl. The camera remains in this static CU from behind implying a gaze shot which is not followed by a POV (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

Off-screen: Despite assurances that spraying poses no significant health risks to the public...

Cut to the helicopters in a crane shot (Fig. 11). The camera pans past the helicopters. With this shot the non-diegetic music sets out again and in addition the diegetic sound and the continuing voice-over of the news report provide three different sound sources.

Voice-over: ... the public is not convinced. People sense they're being kept in the dark purposely. Furthermore, there is no consensus, as to whether the objectives are even realistic.

The following cut introduces the Finnigans. In a crane shot of the Finnigans' house, the camera tilts down from the roof and pulls back from the building providing an FS of the house. In the same take, the camera pushes in on a window. The camera movement from the top of the house to the window is complemented by the only sound in this shot, being the continued news report.

Voice-over: Is this a war that can be won? Some say no. Are we just going through the motions so certain people can cover themselves?

Shortly before the cut to the interior of the bedroom, a non-diegetic off-screen voice of a man calling out for his wife ("Honey, it's on...!") briefly overlaps with the voice-over ("Some say yes.")



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

With the cut, the voice-over narrator turns into a diegetic on-screen narrator (Fig. 12).

On screen: How is this war fought?

From the shot of the TV screen the camera tilts up and captures Ann in an MS, pans to the right and tracks her into bed capturing both Ann and Howard in an MS (Fig. 13).

The MS reveals that Howard is the news anchor. The only sound throughout the MS remains his off-screen voice on TV.

Off-screen: It's like fishing. We use bait. Actually, the bait is spread over our city....



Fig. 14

Cut back to the CU of the TV screen (Fig 14).

On-screen: ...at night, like a glaze.

Cut back to the couple in the same MS and the next three shots alternate between the CU of the TV and the MS of the couple. The on-screen/off-screen report continues throughout this final sequence of shots introducing the Finnigans now overlapping with the couple's on-screen / off-screen dialog until a cut to the crane shot of the helicopters ends their sequence. The end of Howard's news report bleeds over to the crane shot, while the camera pans in a high angle above the helicopters. The aerial shots are only complemented by the diegetic sound, while at the end of the take non-diegetic classical music sets out and bleeds over to the next shot, a CU of a cellist, turning the music into diegetic sound. This sequence introduces Zoe Trainer, the cellist performing on stage, and the Wyman and Kane couple in the auditorium. With a cut to the aerial shot of the city with non-diegetic sound of the helicopter panes and non-diegetic music, the camera pushes in on the city which is followed by a cut to a CU of a car. The non-diegetic music continues and an MS of Jerry Kaiser blanketing his car sets out the introduction of the Kaisers. We hear the approaching helicopters suggested by the increasing volume of the non-diegetic sound. In Jerry's eye-line match the camera tilts up and captures the helicopters in a low angle, spraying poison. In an LS of the house, the camera remains stationary when Jerry walks up the stairs to the door. Throughout this shot, we hear the off-screen sounds of the helicopters. A cut to the interior of the house captures him in a slightly low-angle MS opening the door, complemented by the withdrawing sound of the helicopters and the off-screen voice of Howard on TV.



Fig. 15

Off -screen: ... a policy of coexistence with the medfly.... cause that's the only realistic...

Jerry's gaze shot (Fig. 15) is followed by a POV shot (Fig. 16), where the camera tilts down suggesting that he is looking at his son while the previous shot must have been the





Fig. 16

boy's POV shot looking up at his father (Fig. 15).

On-screen: ...course open to us.

Howard's on-screen / off-screen voice continues throughout the scenes inside the Kaisers' house, overlapping with the phone conversation of Jerry's wife, Lois, which is also alternating on-screen / off-screen when a cut to the helicopters ends this introductory sequence. With the crane shot of the helicopters, non-diegetic jazz music sets out as the camera tilts down and pulls in on a coffee shop in a high angle FS. The jazz music continues when a cut to the parking lot captures the limousine we have seen before. Positioned inside the coffee shop, the camera pulls back from Earl as he enters and eventually takes a seat. In the frame, Earl is captured in a CU, while the waitress in the far left of the frame is out of focus. The camera remains static when the waitress walks towards Earl, now capturing Doreen Piggot in an MS standing next to Earl. From there on, the camera pans to the right and pushes in on the window and a cut to the helicopters ends Doreen's introduction. The volume of the non-diegetic music increases and in the crane shot the camera tilts up past the helicopters. When tilting down again, the camera captures a jazz bar in a high-angle crane shot pushing in on the building. With a cut, we see a CU of a jazz singer. The non-diegetic music has changed into diegetic sound. The sequence at the jazz bar introduces Tess Trainer, the mother of the cellist, and the Bush couple. Similar to the scenes at the concert, the CU is followed by an FS of the performer on stage, while the subsequent shots show the other protagonists in the audience. The diegetic music of the jazz club bleeds over to a crane shot of the helicopters adding the diegetic sound of the helicopters and once again Howard's voice-over bleeding over to the sequence at the Shepards'.



Fig.17

The sequence starts with a shot of a TV screen in an oblique angle (Fig. 17). In the same take, the camera instantly pans to the left capturing two of the Shepard children



Fig. 18

and the mother, and pans further left providing an FS of the dog at the doorsill, barking at the helicopters and the daughter of the family, out of focus. A cut back to the mother sets out another pan of the camera.

With the pan, the camera follows her movement to the doorsill without pushing in on her but remains static. Gene Shepard runs into the frame and the camera captures the doorsill. All protagonists move in front of the camera (Fig. 18) until Gene steps out into the yard effecting an FS. The following cut to the helicopters from a low angle imply Gene's POV shot as he gets showered with medfly poison shown in the subsequent MS of him. The off-screen sound from the TV is almost inaudible throughout these scenes, being outweighed by the off-screen/on-screen sounds of the helicopters and most of all by the quarrel between the Shepard couple. The sequence ends with a tracking shot following Gene as he leaves the house and a cut to a crane shot of the helicopters and non-diegetic music. From there we have jump cuts between the concert hall, the Kaisers', the jazz club until at the end of this opening sequence, we find ourselves back in the Finnigans' bedroom.



Fig. 19

A FS of the family now getting ready for bed (Fig. 19) is followed by a cut to a CU of the TV screen in the next shot (Fig. 20).

On-screen: This is Howard Finnigan with thoughts to make you think.



Fig. 20

The broadcast has ended. A wipe on the TV screen sets out the signature tune of the news program and bleeds over to the crane shot of the helicopters and remains as non-diegetic music, now overlapping with the diegetic sound of the helicopters (Fig. 21).



Fig. 21



Fig. 22

In a straight-on angle, the crane shot first remains stationary as the helicopters fly towards the camera until later in the same take, the camera pans downwards with the descending helicopters (Fig. 21). The next cut shows an MS of Stormy Weathers, the pilot (Fig. 22). With this shot the non-diegetic music stops.

In this opening sequence, the introduction of four character groups – Earl Piggot, the Finnigans, the Kaisers and the Shepards - makes use of a TV set in the mise-en-scène airing the very same broadcast by Howard Finnigan. These four character groups are placed at the beginning, middle and end adding to the effect, that all interlocking shots of different character groups run in parallel. Throughout the sequence, jump cuts from one place to another, thus opening up new character arcs, are connected by means of sound techniques functioning as bridges and transitions to another storyline. Howard's voice-over recurrently bleeds over to the next scene. In the same manner, the repeated non-diegetic music complementing the shots of the helicopters functions as a transition placing the action into the same time and place. In a broader sense, the helicopters start out at night and descend in daylight, framing this introductory sequence and suggesting that all scenes must have taken place in the same night and place. The aerial crane shots which tilt down and push in on buildings, props or protagonists, have the effect that at that very instant the camera spots a point in the city providing a glimpse of what is happening at that moment. It could be remarked, that the final transition from the Finnigans to the descending helicopters and Stormy Weathers deviates from simultaneity, as the TV broadcast ends at night and the MS of Weathers evidently implies a shift in time. Nonetheless, the bleed-over of the signature tune which remains throughout the final shots as non-diegetic music and the fact that one of the protagonists himself was flying one of the helicopters places him into the simultaneous story progression during the night. From the last scenes of this introductory sequence, then, all storylines set out.

In *Magnolia*, the live TV show “What Do Kids Know?” threads throughout the film, suggesting simultaneity of action in a similar manner. Characters actively see it on TV within their storyline while others are directly connected to the show. *Magnolia* tells the story of three character groups (Partridge family and Phil, Gator family, Spector family) and two individual characters (Officer Jim, Donnie Smith) in interlocking mode. The following sequence captures all characters shortly before a turning point in each of their storylines running parallel to the quiz show. The sequence starts with an introduction of the show with the on-screen voice of a studio team member:

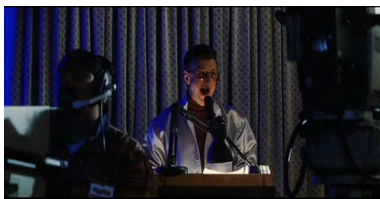


Fig. 23

The studio staff member starts with his introduction captured in an MS (Fig. 23).

On-screen voice: Live from Burbank California. It's “What Do Kids Know?”

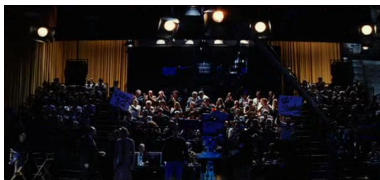


Fig. 24

Cut to the audience. The camera pushes in on the applauding audience (Fig. 24).

Off-screen voice: Going into our thirty-third year on air, it's America's longest running quiz show and the place where three kids get to challenge three adults and in the end see who's boss.



Fig. 25

Cut to the kid's panel presenting the candidates. The camera pushes in on Stanley Spector and captures him in a CU (Fig.25).

Off-screen voice: Moving towards their eighth consecutive week as champions we have the kids: Richard, Julia and Stanley



Fig. 26

Cut to the adult's panel presenting them all together in an MS (Fig. 26).

Off-screen voice: And our new adult challengers today are Todd, Luis, and Mim.

Cut to Jimmy Gator in an XCU from behind (Fig. 27).

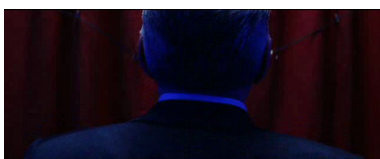


Fig. 27

Off-screen voice: Please say hello and welcome to the always ready host of “What Do Kids Know?” Your favourite and my boss: Jimmy Gator.



Fig. 28

In the same take, the curtain opens and the studio's spotlight shines directly into the camera. A tracking shot follows Jimmy as he moves into the studio (Fig. 28) .

From this point onwards Jimmy Gator's voice-over narration holds all subsequent shots together. Apart from his voice, non-diegetic dramatic music provides a sound bridge throughout the following sequence. The tracking shot which ends the studio sequence is followed by a cut to the interior of Earl Partridge's house.



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31

A CU of a TV screen shows Gator as he starts with his introduction of the show (Fig. 29). The camera pulls back from the TV screen and a swish pan to the right shows Phil suggesting a POV shot followed by a gaze shot as he is watching the show (Fig. 30). The camera pushes in on the character capturing him in an MS (Fig. 30). As he turns his eyes to his left, the camera pans to the right and pushes in on Earl Partridge lying in bed (Fig. 31).

Voice-over: back again, again, again. I'm Jimmy Gator and believe it or not we are at the end of week seven, going towards eight for these three incredible kids....



Fig. 32



Fig. 33

Earl Partridge's MS is followed by a cut to Frank during his interview. The camera pushes in to a CU of his face (Fig. 32). A swish pan to the right presents his interviewee and once again the camera pushes in to a CU of her face (Fig. 33). The sound is now overlapping mixing Gator's voice-over and Frank's voice while the latter is almost inaudible.



Voice-over:... who, hello, hello, are just two days and two games from the “What Do Kids Know?” record for the longest running quiz show in television history....



Fig. 34



Fig. 35

A swish pan to the right sequences the next shot (Fig. 34). From the position of a semi-MS, the camera pushes in on officer Jim up to an MS followed by a cut to Claudia Gator. The camera pushes in on Claudia showing her face in a CU (Fig. 35). Their conversation is barely audible as was Frank’s voice in the preceding scene.

Voice-over: ... we’re endorsed by the PTA and the North American Teacher’s Foundation and we try and do our best to hold standards high... that’s why we’re the longest running quiz show in television history...



Fig. 36



Fig. 37

Cut to a TV set (Fig. 36). The camera pushes in on the TV screen. Significantly, Jimmy turns his head to the left before a swish pan to the right presents Donnie Smith. Again the camera pushes in on the character up to a CU of his face (Fig. 37). Similar to Phil’s scene, the POV precedes the gaze shot.

Voice-over: ... and let me say, with these three kids right here, I wouldn’t be surprised if we’ve got a while to go, but today is a dangerous day...



Fig. 38



Fig. 39

A swish pan to the right shows Linda Partridge. Once again the camera pushes in on the character and remains in a CU (Fig. 38) of her face. The gaze shot is not followed by a revealing POV but a swish pan to the right presents Rose Gator. Starting out from an FS showing her full body the camera pushes in on her up to this MS (Fig. 39). Same as Linda’s shot, her gaze shot is not revealed. A swish pan to the right sets out the



Fig. 40

same camera motion pushing in on a character up to a CU (Fig. 40).

Voice-over: ... for I have met three adult challengers backstage and they are quite a challenge for our youngsters.... so let's get this game off and away. Let's jump right in, quick re-cap for those who don't know. Round one: Three categories

Jimmy's voice-over ends with the MS of his wife Rose while the non-diegetic classical music continues in the next shot, where off-screen noises evolve into spoken lines. The non-diegetic music finishes and eventually ends this sequence. Although the show is recurring throughout the film, especially as it is an important narrative element in some storylines, it is not the only way how simultaneity is expressed in *Magnolia*. Recurring weather reports, rain, and sequences of scenes set at nighttime or daytime additionally suggest that events unfold at the same time. Nevertheless, this sequence implies simultaneity in a significant way. The continuous voice-over suggests that all characters are employed in different forms of action during the span of Jimmy's introductory speech while the non-diegetic dramatic music gives weight to the tension each of these characters undergo in their storyline at that very moment. Camera movement effects the simultaneous feature just as well. The fast swish pans to the right, as if the viewers were turning their head to have a look at another character at that very moment, instantly move us to different locations and the continuous push-ins to the characters' close-ups affect this short sequence in a very dynamic, fast-paced way.

## 6.2. (Different) Times and Places in *The Red Violin* and *The Hours*

*The Red Violin* contains five episodes set in Cremona (1), Vienna (2), Oxford (3), Shanghai (4) and Montreal (5) spanning the story over four centuries. The first and the last episode are quite significant considering their order within the film. The film begins in the middle of the fifth episode at the auction of the red violin in present time Montreal. Scenes of the auction recur throughout the film in between other episodes everytime rolling the narrative of the episode a little further backwards in time. When the fifth episode is sequenced at the end of the film, the

viewer is presented the full story of the final episode from the beginning. Right after the first scenes at the auction house, a flashback brings us to 17th century Cremona. The maid of luthier Busatti, traisted with prophetic skills, foretells the future to her mistress by reading five tarot cards. Each card then is assigned to an episode in the film. Through editing techniques (jump cuts, dissolves) and the soundtrack, flashbacks and flashforwards in time are visualised. The prophetic maid is engaged as an on-screen narrator in the first episode which turns into voice-over narration for all subsequent episodes providing a bridge to a different time and place.

The sequence for analysis starts out at the end of episode 2, after the funeral of the child prodigy, the protagonist of episode 2, who is buried with the violin and will show how the feature of time and place is visualised in a transition to episode 3.



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 44

A semi-establishing shot of the mentor kneeling at the grave of his protégé ends the second episode (Fig. 41).

Voice-over: And then I see a period of life...

Cut to a CU of the maid. The camera pans slightly, almost imperceptibly, to the right, remaining in the CU of the maid (Fig. 42).

On screen: ... full of lust and energy across mountains and oceans. It's confusing, my mistress, I know. But I see it with certainty. And your soul is the soul of Lazarus.

Non-diegetic violin-music starts and a cut back to the setting of the second episode shows the defiled grave of the boy (Fig. 43). In the same take, the camera pushes in on the grave which shows the body of the boy, pushes past the grave and pans to the right, tilts up and the movement stops with an LS of the mountains (Fig. 44).





Fig. 45



Fig. 46



Fig. 47



Fig. 48

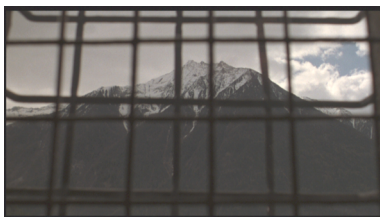


Fig. 49

From the LS, the frame dissolves into a frame presenting a group of gypsies (Fig. 45).

The non-diegetic music turns into diegetic music with the fade in of the semi-establishing shot of the group (Fig. 45).

Two dissolves are used instead of camera movement. The first one moves us nearer to the group while the second one fades in a character in an MS (Fig. 46). From this MS, a chain of four subsequent shots are presented in the same manner. The frame dissolves into the next frame, showing four different people in an MS playing the violin (Fig. 47). The mise-en-scène in all four shots reveals the season and implies that time has passed. The final MS dissolves into a semi-LS of a sailing-ship (Fig. 48). A tracking shot follows the ship in a straight-on angle and once again the shot dissolves into an aerial shot of the ship. The diegetic music fades and the overlapping sound of seagulls gets louder. A jump cut to a semi-establishing shot (Fig. 49) sets out a short sequence of the auction.

The next shot shows the monks of the orphanage in present time Germany, where the child prodigy was first discovered – 200 years earlier. The monks are taking part in the bidding for the red violin. Through cross cutting, we are taken to and fro between the orphanage and the auction house. This sequence ends with a jump cut to the following shot:



Fig. 50



Fig. 51



Fig. 52



Fig. 53



Fig. 54

With this shot of the tarot cards we are back in Cremona. The maid continues with the foreseeing. The card which is displayed is the card of the devil. The only sound we perceive during this shot is the off-screen sigh of the maid.

A cut to the FS of the third protagonist (Fig. 50) cues the voice-over narration of the maid.

Voice-over: And then a man will step into your life. Handsome and intelligent. He will seduce you with his talents... and worse...

A pulling shot captures the man on his walk. In the same take the camera pushes in on him and captures him in an MS.

Cut to shot a CU of the maid (Fig. 51). She completes her narration: On-screen: ... he is the devil.

Cut back to episode 3 (Fig. 52). The camera pans to the left and provides a semi-establishing shot of the scene. One of the gypsies is playing the violin. It is the same non-diegetic music from the previous gypsy sequence. Cut to the protagonist (Fig. 53). The camera pushes in on the protagonist and dollies past him capturing him from behind. He is looking for the source of the music. The camera movement stops when the protagonist



Fig. 55



Fig. 56

reaches the clearing with an over-the-shoulder shot (Fig. 54).

The CU of the gypsy (Fig. 55) implies that the protagonist was looking at her in the preceding shot, but the viewer gets a neutral shot of the woman. We see both the gypsy and the protagonist in the frame, while the latter is kept in shallow focus. In the same take, the camera dollies around the woman to the right side of the frame, implying a POV shot of the protagonist. The diegetic music stops. At the same time, a cut to the protagonist in an FS (Fig. 56) sets out the third episode.

This transition sequence jumps to and fro between three different centuries. From the end of episode 2, a flashback brings us back to Cremona and from there the story is presented in a flash-forward. The maid's narration that the violin will undergo a journey serves as an explanation for the adjoined gypsy sequence. The repetitive dissolve into another character suggests that during this unspecified stretch of time, the violin has only been in the possession of the gypsies. In addition, this editing technique summarizes the stretch of time which must have passed on the story level between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The constant violin tune throughout the gypsy sequence additionally affects the condensed span of time. The recurring close-ups of the maid and her gaze shots imply that the sequenced shots are in fact visualising what she sees. Traiting her with the prophetic skill, it could be considered that she is the focalizer of all episodes. The sequence at the orphanage reveals the phone bidder at the auction, as in a previous sequence in the film the monks on the other side of the line were not shown. Hence, one piece of information is added to the fifth episode's storyline in this transition sequence. While the story of the film has the violin connecting each episode as it affects each protagonist's life, the plot has the prophecy and the narration of the maid linking different times and places.

*The Hours* combines the feature of time and place with the feature of repetition & similarity. Three different interlocking storylines of three different female protagonists, Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Clarissa Vaughan set out shortly after a brief prologue covering the drowning scene of Virginia Woolf. The plot links these three female characters with Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* and thematically with the characters' solitude, unhappiness and mental instability. On the visual level, similar shots and similar camera movement are significantly repetitive after jump cuts to a different time, while continuous non-diegetic music spreads over sequences showing each storyline in interlocking mode. The following shots are taken from the introductory sequence. In all three episodes, the husband (in Woolf and Brown's episode) and the partner (in Vaughan's episode) return home. The first shots presenting both husbands and Vaughan's partner show the time and the place superimposed in the frame, being LA, 1951 – Richmond, 1923 – and New York, 2001:



Fig. 57



Fig. 58



Fig. 59



Fig. 60

Laura Brown's introduction starts with a gaze shot of her husband assumedly looking at her from the doors (Fig. 57). Without a cut to a POV, the camera tilts down from his MS and pans to the right across the room and stops in an MS of Laura still being asleep (Fig. 58). A cut presents Leonard Woolf on his way home where he meets Virginia's doctor. From this high-angle long shot (Fig. 59), the camera tilts up and captures a closed door followed by a cut, which brings us inside a bedroom. From the rear end of the bed, the camera pans to the right over Virginia's body until the camera movement stops in the MS of Virginia lying in bed (Fig. 60). The following cut presents Sally in the streets of New York.





Fig. 61



Fig. 62



Fig. 63



Fig. 64



Fig. 65

When she gets into bed, her gaze shot (Fig. 61) sets out a pan to the right and captures Clarissa in an MS (Fig. 62).

The non-diegetic music is consistent throughout this sequence. After Clarissa's MS, three shots follow where the diegetic sound of an alarm bell is added to the non-diegetic music in each shot.

It is morning and all three characters are awake now. Laura is captured in a high-angle FS slightly rolling over to her husband's side of the bed (Fig. 63). Virginia's shot type remains the same (Fig. 64) while Clarissa's MS is slightly more distanced than before, now capturing the clock (Fig. 65).

The gaze shot of Laura's husband and Clarissa's partner anticipate the presentation of either protagonist, employing similar camera movement resulting in similar shot types. The gaze shot, which is missing in Virginia's introduction, is compensated by the brief dialog between her husband and the

doctor about Virginia's health condition while the camera movement and the eventual MS is held in a similar style. In this manner, the film makes use of recurring visual and aural elements which connect each storyline at the surface level such as in the following two sequences. Both combine a similar mise-en-scène and soundtrack. In the first sequence, which starts out shortly after the introductory sequence, the non-diegetic music from the opening is still continued:



Fig. 66

This shot shows a CU of the flowers and Clarissa's hands (Fig. 66). When she lifts the vase, a cut to the next shot shows the hands of Laura's husband as he lifts the vase from the table (Fig. 67).



Fig. 67



Fig. 68

The camera remains static when he makes his way to the kitchen. A cut shows a CU of the vase and in the same take, he moves to the right side of the frame, concealing the flowers and filling the frame with his back. This frame is followed by a cut to Virginia's house. The maid completes his rightwards movement and we see a different vase, and yet in a similar type of shot (Fig. 68).

Although the transitions between these shots are jump cuts, the movement of lifting the vase up to the maid's movement around the vase is almost seamless, while time is rolled backwards, as we jump from 2001, to 1951 and then again to 1923. Through fast cutting which adjoins these three separate shots in a very quick manner, we get the impression that one person performs the movement. As can be seen in the shots, the mise-en-scène is similar by only keeping the flowers and the lower body and hands in a CU, which is complemented by the non-diegetic music. The second sequence does not make use of any non-diegetic music and consists of six shots:



Fig. 69

(Fig. 69) Off-screen sound: tweeting birds; On-screen sound: Virginia leafing through the pages of her writing pad.

An MS of Virginia in her chair preparing herself to write the first sentence of her novel (Fig. 69) is followed by a cut to Laura.



Fig. 70

(Fig. 70) Off-screen sound: tweeting birds; On-screen sound: Laura leafing through the novel.

An MS of Laura who is about to start reading the novel (Fig. 70) is followed by a semi-LS of Clarissa standing behind her desk (Fig. 71).

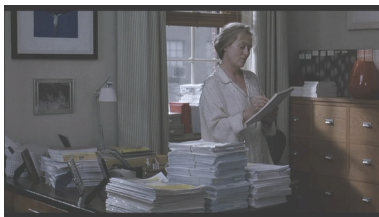


Fig. 71

On-screen sound: Clarissa noting down something down on her manuscript (Fig. 71)

The mise-en-scène of these three shots is quite similar. All three women are engaged in a writing/reading activity. The window at the far right of the frame is

similar in Fig. 69 and Fig. 71, while the off-screen sound of the birds and the position of Virginia and Laura at the left side of the frame resemble each other in Fig. 69 and Fig. 70. The camera captures them from a slightly sideward position. These three shots are followed by the following set of shots. The camera has apparently moved closer to each protagonist:



Fig. 72

The camera now captures Virginia in a CU speaking out loud the first sentence of her novel (Fig. 72).

On-screen: Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.



Fig. 73

As soon as the line is spoken, a cut to Laura shows her in a semi-MS. From there the camera pushes in on her up to a CU while she reads out the first sentence of the novel (Fig. 73).

On-screen: Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.



Fig. 74

Same as before, as soon as the line is spoken, a cut to Clarissa presents her now in an MS calling out to her friend (Fig. 74):

On-screen: Sally, I think I'll buy the flowers myself.

As these examples show, the film makes use of repetitive and similar shot types, camera movement, and mise-en-scène to express the feature of time and place at the level of the whole film. Nevertheless, repetition and similarity are not the only stylistic means by which these three separate storylines (leaving aside the crossing between old Laura and Clarissa in the final scenes of the film) are connected and how the feature of different times and places is expressed.

There are recurring scenes in the film where Virginia, as the novelist, “foresees” what will happen in her book. Sequences start out with gaze shots of Virginia suddenly jumping to another storyline and hence to another time and place, almost implying that subsequent shots and scenes are subjective viewpoints of Virginia.

At one point in Virginia’s storyline, her sister and the children visit the Woolfs. In a moment of inattentiveness, her little niece enquires about her absent-mindedness. This short sequence interlocks Virginia and Laura’s storylines.

Laura, at this point in her story, has left her little son with an acquainted woman and checked at a hotel to commit suicide:



Fig. 75



Fig. 76

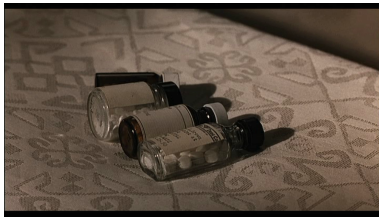


Fig. 77



Fig. 78



Fig. 79



Fig. 80



Fig. 81

Non-diegetic music threads through this sequence.

An eye-line match of Virginia's niece (her gaze shot followed by a POV) and her question ("What were you thinking?") presents a gaze shot (Fig. 75) of Virginia. Without any answer to the question a cut brings us to the CU (Fig. 76) of Laura, again making use of an eyeline match as the gaze shot is followed by a POV as she looks at the pills she has brought with her (Fig. 77). From a high-angle, the camera tilts down capturing Laura in a full shot. In the same take, water flows from both sides of the bed quickly rising and flooding the room (Fig. 78). With this shot, diegetic sound starts. The camera captures Laura lying in the same position, this time from the side in a semi MS (Fig. 79). Two subsequent shows cut back to the same camera position as in Fig. 78 and Fig. 79 capturing Laura from above while she is almost swallowed up by the flood. When Laura's body is completely submerged in the water (Fig. 80), a cut back to Virginia's gaze shot (Fig. 81) with the bleed-over sound of the flooding cues the answer to her niece's question on-screen: "I was going to kill my heroine... but, I've changed my mind". A cut back to a CU of Laura follows, who sits up with a start, gasping for breath.



At the very end of the film, a conversation between Virginia and her husband sets out a similar sequence. Virginia tells her husband that she will have the poet die in the novel. A gaze shot of her is followed by a CU of Laura's little son Richard lying in bed. Shortly before this brief sequence in Virginia's storyline, Richard, the close friend and author, whom Clarissa is the editor of, jumps out of his window in Clarissa's storyline. The connection between Richard, Laura and hence Clarissa is fully revealed through Virginia's conversation with her husband and the adjoined sequence which suggests her thoughts<sup>20</sup>.

Evidently, *The Hours* visualises the feature of time and place by making use of stylistic means, continuous non-diegetic music, and moreover, implying subjectivity of one of the protagonists. In a sense, there is certainly a similarity between the prophetic skills of the maid in *The Red Violin* and Virginia Woolf's internal visualisation of her story that both connect different times and places. Nonetheless, and as it is characteristic for episodic films, there is an equal amount of focus on each episode in both examples.

### 6.3. Multiple Perspectives in Vantage Point and 11:14

Both *Vantage Point* and *11:14* are fairly similar in their structure, as the story is told from a specific viewpoint where each episode employs its protagonist as the focalizer of the story. In this sense, events as they are presented are narrowed down to the perception of each protagonist. Furthermore, both films combine the feature of perspective with simultaneity suggesting that events in different storylines happen at the same time. Consequently the combination of multiple perspectives and simultaneity has the effect that the same events are not only shown once, but repeated in varied modes depending on the protagonist.

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<sup>20</sup> To point out a significant aspect, I would like to note at this point, that Laura and Clarissa's storylines are reminiscent of the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. Laura's hallucinations and her emotional stress and solitude, and the fact that her son Richard commits suicide, are certainly leaning on Septimus in the novel; Clarissa as the host of Richard's party, who walks around New York (instead of London) continuously thinking of times past, bears traces of the title character in the novel. In the film, her partner is Sally, whom, in the novel, Clarissa could not be with. Considering the technique that the film frequently suggests Virginia's subjectivity, I would pose the following question: could one argue that *The Hours* is an episodic biopic focusing on one stage of Virginia Woolf's professional life accomplishing the novel, while the other two storylines are partly deviated visualised thoughts?

*Vantage Point* contains six sequential episodes, starting out at noon in Salamanca, Spain. As was aforementioned, the film employs the assassination of the U.S. President as the kernel event, which is shown in all six episodes, but as the self-referential title implies, from a different angle. In a significant way, each episode fulfils some kind of function and contributes to the overall outcome in the final scenes of the film, as each episode and hence each protagonist sees specific things which remain out of sight for other protagonists. The film's six episodes are assigned to the following protagonists and character groups:

- (1) News broadcast team (Angie, Rex, Mark)
- (2) Thomas Barnes, Secret Service agent
- (3) Enrique, Spanish policeman
- (4) Howard Lewis, American tourist
- (5) Henry Ashton, President of the United States of America
- (6) Sam Suarez, leader of a terrorist group & his team (Veronica, Javier)

While episode 1 provides a more objective viewpoint on the events, all subsequent episodes strongly employ subjectivity and different points of interest in the progression within each storyline. Thus, episode 2 interweaves the agent's past with the present event in Salamanca, episode 3 reveals Enrique's involvement in the assassination, episode 4 employs viewpoints of the tourist filming scenes and sights, episode 5 gives an account of the motivation behind the attack and episode 6 unveils the plans of Sam's group. Nonetheless the focus is always on the protagonist of each episode. Considering the number of protagonists, the film barely offers detailed character analyses, which is very common for episodic films. Characters are sketched out in rather stereotypical ways and in a significant manner, the use of different perspectives adopts a meaningful element to provide a yet restricted but closer view of different characters. In this way, we see how Thomas Barnes happens to view archive footage in the news trailer which shows a previous attack on the President where he took the bullet during his service. This past occurrence threads throughout his storyline, in gaze-shot – interior thoughts – sequences recurrently implying that he has not fully recovered from the attack. His mental and physical state is underlined by the *mise-en-scène* at the beginning of his episode, with close-ups of the medication on his bedside table and his uneasiness and over-sensitive behaviour at the plaza.

After episode 1, the transition sequence explicitly rolls back time to “23 minutes earlier” and sets out all subsequent episodes at noon. Thus, from noon all episodes are overlapping and the sequences for analysis are taken from three different episodes where the same encounter between Veronica and Javier is shown and interpreted in different ways.

At the beginning of episode 3, Enrique makes his way through security check when he sees Veronica and Javier:

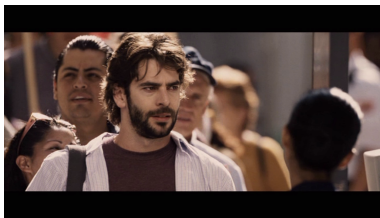


Fig. 82

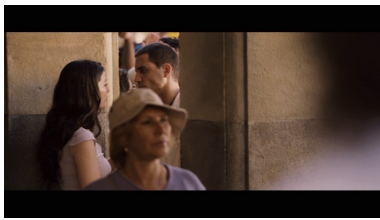


Fig. 83



Fig. 84

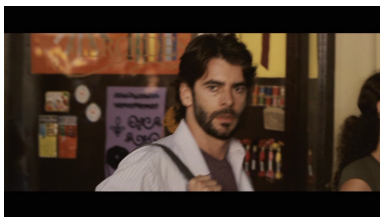


Fig. 85

Suspenseful non-diegetic music is combined with the diegetic on-/off-screen sound of the crowd. Enrique’s eye-line match sequencing his gaze shot (Fig. 82) and POV (Fig. 83) present Veronica and Javier as the object of his gaze. An off-screen bleed-over line of dialog (Javier: “I’ll be at the underpass”) sets out a POV (Fig. 84) and gaze shot as Javier passes by Enrique (Fig. 85). With the non-diegetic music, this short sequence instantly implies that something is troubling Enrique, which is expressed in his short conversation with Veronica. During their conversation two important things are revealed: Enrique hands over a bag which contains a bomb, and his love-relation to Veronica and their mutual plan to take off after the assassination is laid open.

Enrique disperses into the crowd, but what he has seen and heard keeps troubling him. Predominantly it is suggested that his suspicion stems on jealousy. Although this introductory sequence reveals his involvement in the assassination, a clear-cut motivation for his disloyalty as an official is only induced by his relationship to Veronica. Witnessing Veronica and Javier engaged in conversation like a love couple and showing signs of affection for each other, apparently triggers uneasiness and a reason for his distrust. This is emphasised in the following sequence which sets out right after his short encounter with Veronica:



Fig. 86



Fig. 87



Fig. 88

With the CU of Enrique's gaze shot (Fig. 86), the diegetic sound of the cheering crowd is outweighed by the same non-diegetic suspenseful music as before. The gaze shot is sequenced by a POV (Fig. 87), this time visualising his interior thoughts in a flashback of the scene he has witnessed before, including Javier's voice-over that he would wait at the underpass. A cut back to the CU of Enrique (Fig. 88) shows his emotional distress throughout the take. The camera remains in this static position while the diegetic sound of the cheering crowd is completely replaced by the non-diegetic

music and Veronica's voice-over, reprising her lines of dialog from their previous conversation. Enrique's uneasy behaviour and the voice-over in which Veronica repeatedly assures her love for him are clearly not matching and it is implied throughout the sequence that Enrique has justified reasons to be suspicious of Veronica and Javier's mutual relation.

In episode 4, Howard, the American tourist makes his way through the crowd filming local sights, the crowd and the scene of the plaza where he happens to capture Veronica and Javier with his hand-held camera:

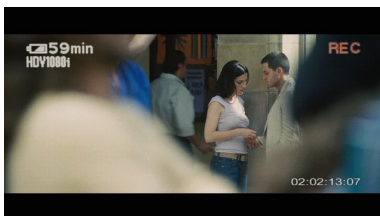


Fig. 89

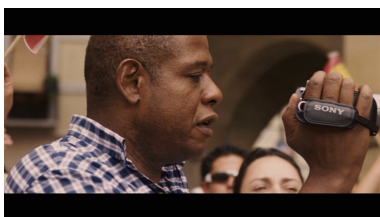


Fig. 90

Howard films the crowd and pans to the left with his camera and captures Veronica and Javier in a semi-MS (Fig. 89). With this shot, the non-diegetic cheerful and rhythmic guitar music turns into a slow and melancholic tune. A cut to Howard's gaze shot in a CU shows him with a slightly embarrassed expression in that take (Fig. 90). Two subsequent shots cut to and fro between the couple and Howard, this time presenting him in an XCU (Fig. 91).

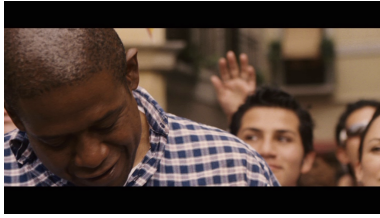


Fig. 91

The only sound of Howard is a deep sigh. With a cut, a sequence sets out where Sam approaches Howard and asks him what he was filming and the two men engage themselves in a brief conversation.

Similar to Enrique's scenes, the non-diegetic music adds weight to the emotional state of the protagonist. In the same manner, as was evident in Enrique's episode, Howard perceives Veronica and Javier as a love couple as well; while the sight of them triggered suspicion in Enrique which was underlined by the tense soundtrack, Howard seems to feel some sentimental gravity predominantly expressed by the non-diegetic music during his short sequence. In both examples, the viewer questions the reason for their sudden uneasiness. The flashback following Enrique's gaze shot points at his jealousy and the rising feeling that Veronica might betray him. Howard's emotional behaviour, in turn, is laid open during his conversation with Sam, a complete stranger, about his separation from his wife which made him decide to take a trip to Europe on his own.

In the final episode, the actual conversation between Veronica and Javier is shown, which is far from an amorous chit-chat of a loving couple. Gestures of affection between them, which were in fact misperceived by Enrique and Howard, are Veronica's threat to have Javier's brother killed in case he fails to kidnap the president. Thus, this very same scene shown for the third time in the film fulfils two functions. It reveals the involvement of Veronica and Javier in the assassination and it resolves why Sam engaged Howard in conversation. Sam makes his way to the plaza and sees Howard standing in the crowd filming:



Fig. 92

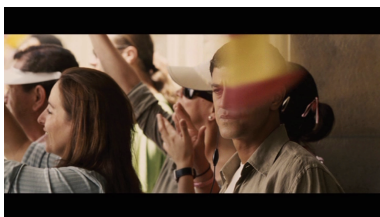


Fig. 93

The sequence starts with an MS of Howard (Fig. 92). A cut shows the CU gaze shot of Sam (Fig. 93), suggesting that the previous shot was a POV (Fig. 92). In a cut back to Howard the camera pulls in on him followed by a fast cut to Sam. The camera pulls in on Sam as he makes his way to Howard.



Fig. 94



Fig. 95



Fig. 96

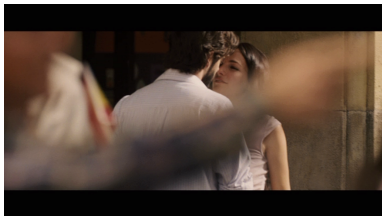


Fig. 97

With a cut, a CU of Sam (Fig. 94) cues the conversation which was shown in episode 4 but is left out in this final episode.

In an eye-line match, the gaze shot of Sam (Fig. 95) is followed by a POV, where Enrique hands over the bag to Veronica (Fig. 96). The camera tilts up and captures the couple in an MS (Fig. 97) suggesting that Sam moves his head from bottom to top while he is looking at them.

With a cut to an MS gaze shot of Sam, he ends his conversation with Howard.

Sam's motivation to approach Howard was obviously to distract him from filming Veronica again, especially during the essential handing over of the bomb and to oversee that all things were completed according to his plans.

As these examples point out, different people see the same thing from a different angle which may trigger feelings, thoughts and motivations to a greater or lesser extent. In this sense, same things can be of major or minor interest to different characters. In addition, these subjective viewpoints give away brief characterizations of each protagonist without providing any detailed character development throughout the film. Considering these three protagonists, Enrique is sketched out as the suspicious lover, Howard as the emotionally affected husband, and Sam as the over-cautious mastermind which is not just made evident in the examples taken for the analyses but recur consistently throughout each of their episodes. The film implies that subjective feelings generate further progression in each storyline, as Enrique makes his way to the underpass to face Veronica and Javier, Howard takes care of a little girl who loses her mother in the chaos after the bombing, and Sam continues to direct his team. The conversation between Veronica and Javier in the final episode reveals that his brother is kept hostage by Veronica which is his motivation to cooperate with Sam's team. Nevertheless,

none of these separate small stories are fully resolved. Why is Enrique so suspicious? What happened to Howard and his wife? Why did Sam plan the attack in the first place? Why did Veronica capture Javier's brother? While the film's ending points at the common consensus that crime does not pay having all characters involved in the attack eventually die, no clear-cut answer is given to these questions.

In a similar manner, *11:14* tells its story employing the viewpoint of different protagonist. The film contains five sequential episodes where each episode raises questions which are partly resolved in one of the subsequent episodes whereas a full resolution at the end of the film is clearly missing considering that characters' fates are not further pursued. Despite the dominance of subjective shots expressing subjectivity on behalf of protagonists' viewpoints in *Vantage Point*, there are cuts to more objective viewpoints (such as aerial shots of the plaza) which suggest alternating external and internal focalization. *11:14*, however, narrows down the notion of focalization and each episode is presented almost exclusively from its protagonists' viewpoint. In addition, the film explicitly sets the time frame in which each protagonist's story is told. What s/he cannot see, simply because it is out of their time range or due to a different setting, is left out. *11:14* is structured in the following manner:

10:54-----	10:55-----	11:04-----	11:09-----	11:13-----	<b>11:14-----</b>	<b>→</b>
(5) Cheri-----						→ crash marks the ending
(4) Duffy						→ crash → arrest
	(3) Frank					→ Erin's corpse → home
		(2) Guys				→ crash → drive to hospital
			(1) Jack	→ Erin's corpse → cemetery		

As the timeline shows, the episodes are sequenced in reversed order starting out with the episode nearest to 11:14, the time where the film ends. Nevertheless, each story in episode 1-4 continues after 11:14 for an unspecified amount of time and briefly follows protagonists' action before an abrupt cut sets out a transition sequence and cues another episode. Protagonists' paths cross throughout the film, and in overlapping time frames of different episodes these crossings are shown exclusively from one viewpoint. These crossings in combination with multiple



perspective and simultaneity, then, reprise same events perceived at the same time by different people. Cheri's crash, which ends the film, for example, is shown in episode 2, episode 4 and obviously in episode 5, limiting the viewpoint to each protagonist. The second episode is told from the perspective of three guys in a van and hence the whole episode is predominantly set inside the van. At the far end of this episode, the driver turns around to slap one of his friends who pees out of the window. With the following shot, the accident as seen from the guys' point of view sets out.

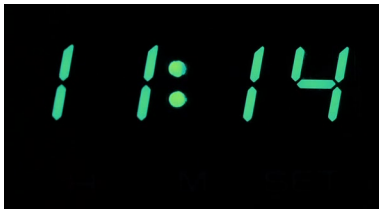


Fig. 98

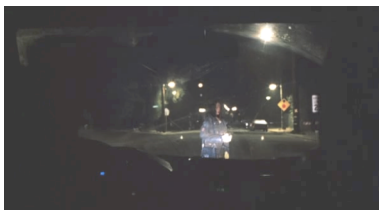


Fig. 99



Fig. 100



Fig. 101



Fig. 102



Fig. 103

A CU of the time (Fig. 98) inside the van is followed by a fast cut to the over-the-shoulder shot of the driver and POV of the guy sitting in the back of the van (Fig. 99). The camera pushes in on Cheri in fast motion suggesting the speed of the vehicle (Fig. 99). In this take, the guys run over Cheri and four subsequent shots adjoined through fast cutting inside the van imply the impact the crash had on the guys. A switch to external focalization presents the scene from outside the guys' perspective in an LS capturing the van and Cheri (Fig. 100). As will turn out later, however, this external view is Duffy's POV shot in episode 4. A cut back to the guys sequences an eye-line match with the gaze shot (Fig. 101) and subsequent POV (Fig. 102) shot of Cheri and back to a gaze shot of the guys. With a fast cut to the external view (and Duffy's POV shot), the camera tracks Duffy's run to Cheri and a cut shows again another eye-line match with the gaze shot (Fig. 103) and subjective shot from inside the van, this time including Duffy bending over Cheri (Fig. 104).





Fig. 104

The shot in Fig. 104 is evidently an over-the-shoulder shot of the driver and a POV shot of the second guy sitting in the back of the van.

From the CU of the time, up to the LS of the van, fast cutting makes the individual shots almost imperceptible, which affects the fast paced tempo of this short sequence. Especially the speedy camera movement pushing in on Cheri in one take chaining up the subsequent shots inside the van, only come to a halt with the LS of the van.

In episode 4, Duffy gets out of his car to meet Cheri which sets out the same sequence from his perspective.



Fig. 105



Fig. 106



Fig. 107



Fig. 108



Fig. 109

In an eye-line match, Duffy's CU gaze shot (Fig. 105) is followed by an FS of Cheri as she walks towards him (Fig. 106). The camera remains static suggesting Duffy's POV, while Cheri's mobile phone starts ringing. In addition, suspenseful non-diegetic music sets out, anticipating that something will happen. In the same take, the camera pans to the left implying that Duffy turns his head to the left and captures the approaching van (Fig. 107). From this internally focalized shot, a fast cut shows the externally focalized MS of Cheri (Fig. 108). Another fast cut shows the gaze shot of Cheri where her face is highlighted by the headlights of the van (Fig. 109). These exact two shots recur in Cheri's episode and suggest her POV as she turns her head in the take (Fig. 108) which is followed by the gaze shot (Fig. 109). From there a cut switches again to Duffy's point of view.



Fig. 110



Fig. 111



Fig. 112

From the LS in Fig. 110, being Duffy's POV shot, the camera pans to the right, tracking the movement of the van until a fast cut shows Duffy's reaction shot in a CU. Another fast cut, again implying a POV, shows exactly the same LS of the van and Cheri as in Fig. 100. From this POV, the same camera movement tracks Duffy's run to Cheri, but this time, the tracking shot is followed by an XCU of Duffy (Fig. 111) and sets out an eye-line match of Duffy's gaze shot and the POV shot of Cheri's face in an XCU (Fig. 112).

At the end of Cheri's episode, the camera starts with a pulling shot of Cheri as she gets out of her car to walk towards Duffy complemented with non-diegetic music. During this take, jump cuts to shots of other episodes are interlocking with the pulling shot pointing at the simultaneous action at this very moment. We see a CU of Jack driving his car, the guys inside the van, Cheri's father as he pulls over a corpse at the overpass, and Duffy as he gets out of his car, every time cutting back to the pulling shot of Cheri. When she stops in the middle of the street because of the ringing phone, the next sequence starts with the same MS shot in Fig. 108.



Fig. 113

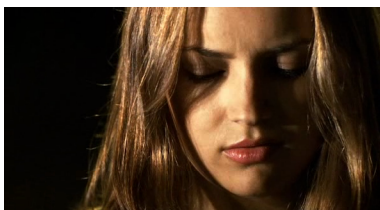


Fig. 114

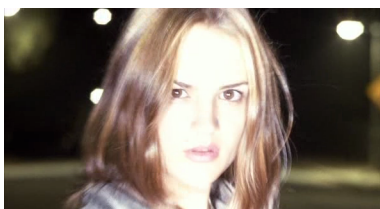


Fig. 115

A cut to the overpass shows her father from a low angle, as he throws down Erin's body (Fig. 113). A cut to the next shot shows a CU of Cheri's mobile phone and the camera tilts up and captures her face in an XCU (Fig. 114), while the camera tilts down tracking the falling body in the subsequent shot at the overpass. From there, several consecutive shots are adjoined through fast cutting: a CU of Duffy, the MS of Cheri as in Fig. 108, a POV of her father looking down the overpass from a high angle,

capturing the corpse and Jack's car passing beneath the overpass, Cheri's medium gaze shot as in Fig. 109 from where the camera pushes in on her as in episode 2 but this time up to a CU (Fig. 115), and a CU of her phone showing the time on the display being 11:14. With this final shot, the film ends.

As was pointed out in the examples, there are switches from internally focalized passages to external focalization, which in fact constitute internal focalization of another protagonist. These, in fact, subjective viewpoints, however, are only revealed when passages are reprised in another episode. The LS of the van (Fig. 100) in episode 2 was clearly outside of the guys' perspective, while it was clearly something that Duffy witnessed at this very moment. The same shot type and same camera movement is reprised suggesting Duffy's subjective viewpoint in his episode. Hence, alternating between internal and external focalization additionally points at the feature of simultaneity.

Vantage Point employs subjective misinterpretation to add more pieces of information to each storyline as in the aforementioned examples, whereas in 11:14 character action and dialog express their emotional state after seeing the same thing from a different perspective. To return to the examples discussed before, the guys commit a hit-and-run after the accident and try to find a mutual version of the story, while Duffy pulls a gun and shoots at the van.

Both films are not just similar in how the feature of multiple perspectives is employed, but also in the way each episode is structured. Apart from the final episode, all preceding episodes end in the middle of their story, which raises questions that are partly resolved in another episode but considering the progression of each protagonist a clear-cut resolution is denied. In this sense, the guys' further progression is not pursued and neither is Duffy's flight from the police car developed any further in the story. Though each episode follows different character groups and tells the story from their point of view, the plot picks out only elements which contribute to the resolution in the final episode.

As was mentioned briefly in chapter 4, another significant similarity in both films is the transition between episodes. In *11:14*, a montage sequence including shots of the most important events of the preceding episode are chained up in reversed order, complemented by suspenseful music where one beat accompanies a new

shot. The sequence ends with the sound of a bell bleeding over to the first shot of the next episode. In *Vantage Point*, all transitions start with a fade-out to a white screen and a dissolve into a frame from where a fast-backward sequence sets out. This sequence contains all important events of the preceding episode. Non-diegetic dramatic music continues throughout these transitions and with the overlapping sound of diegetic off-screen church bells, the time is superimposed in the frame and fades in the first shot of the next episode. In both ways, it is clearly suggested that time is rewound. In *11:14* a little bit further back in time, as each episode sets out earlier than the preceding episode, while in *Vantage Point* time is rolled back to 12 o'clock noon from where the story is discoursed again. In this sense, *Vantage Point* and *11:14* combine not just the feature of multiple perspectives and simultaneity, but also make use of similarity and repetition considering the transitions. While these employ the feature of similarity and repetition on a stylistic level (same non-diegetic music and same visualisation throughout each transition), the repetitive recurrence of the same events as seen from a different viewpoint may certainly be assigned to repetition at the level of both films' narrative.

#### **6.4. Cause-and-Effect in *Sliding Doors* and *Lola rennt***

Once again, it should be pointed out that the feature of cause-and-effect in the context of episodic films should not be mistaken for the trigger of the progressing storyline in the classic structure. If anything, this feature employed in episodic films opens up parallel worlds, as was pointed out by Lommel (130) and allows for drawing up different versions of a story. While *Sliding Doors* alternates between the "real" and the "parallel" world in interlocking mode, *Lola rennt* is structured into 3 sequential episodes adjoined by a transition, making use of different possibilities of the same story resulting in three different endings. In both films, the feature of cause-and-effect raises questions about what could or could never happen to the protagonist, which is interwoven in each storyline. What is similar in both films is the combinative employment of chance and coincidence, as it is implied that these two features affect different versions of one story.

In *Sliding Doors*, the doors to the metro symbolically open up a gateway to the parallel world. Right after the exposition, a chance encounter with a little girl determines whether Helen makes the train in time. The train arrives while Helen rushes down the stairs. A little girl blocks her way on the staircase which consequently sees her miss the train. From there on, the whole sequence is wound back in fast-rewind motion and stops when Helen hastens around the corner. The same LS of the platform capturing the arriving train and the passengers getting off alternates with a pulling shot of Helen moving down the stairs. But this time, the girl is pulled away by her mother and Helen catches the train. With the following cut, two different versions of the story unfold in alternation. In version one, Helen happens to be robbed while waiting for a cab, whereas in the parallel world, she happens to return home to catch her boyfriend Gerry cheating on her. At the beginning and at the end of the film, Helen encounters a man named James in an elevator, first at her workplace and later at a hospital. In the parallel world, she happens to sit next to him in the metro which involves him in her storyline early on, while in the real world, he remains unknown to her until their final encounter at the hospital. Nevertheless, in the real world it is recurrently suggested that Helen and James unconsciously pass each other several times. The sequence taken for analysis starts in the parallel world briefly after Helen has discovered Gerry's disloyalty. By chance, Helen and James are at the same bar and upon recognizing her, James approaches Helen and engages her in a conversation which reveals the incidents of that afternoon:



Fig. 116



Fig. 117

Diegetic on-/off-screen music in the bar continues throughout this sequence.

A shot-reverse-shot captures their conversation cutting to and fro between Helen (Fig. 116) and James (Fig. 117).

Helen tells him what has happened to her after their short encounter in the metro and James offers her company in case she needs to talk to somebody. With a cut from his gaze shot (Fig. 117) back to Helen (Fig. 118), James moves away from her and





Fig. 118



Fig. 119



Fig. 120



Fig. 121



Fig. 122



Fig. 123

returns to his friend who is waiting at the other end of the bar.

A cut shows the hall of the bar (Fig. 119). The same diegetic song continues while the camera captures Gerry and Helen in an FS entering the bar (Fig. 119). The camera remains static until the couple passes by, then pans to the left stopping in an MS of James and his friend in the foreground while Gerry and Helen are positioned in the background (Fig. 120). A cut to the next shot shows Gerry, Helen and James in an MS (Fig. 121), implying one of the frequent instances that Helen and James' path cross in the real world. From the MS, a fast cutting sequence sets out summarizing time. In several consecutive shots, they clink glasses, replenish their beverages while the very same song is still being played.

With a cut, the camera provides an FS (Fig. 122) of Helen. As she makes her way to the table, Helen slightly bumps into James. The camera dollies past her and when she reaches the table the camera movement stops with a shot of the entrance. The diegetic music changes into the next song when a semi-FS of Anna sets out another sequence in the parallel world (Fig. 123). The transition from the FS in Fig. 122 up to the frame in Fig. 123 is established by the dolly shot in one take, seamlessly adjoining the real and the parallel world.



Fig. 124



Fig. 125



Fig. 126



Fig. 127

A cut to the over-the-shoulder shot of Helen implies Helen's gaze at her friend (Fig. 124). The table in the corner is unoccupied in this frame. In this take, the camera remains static when Anna walks towards Helen and a cut presents both in an MS (Fig. 125) following their conversation about the prior events of that day.

In an FS, James turns his head to look at Helen, which is followed by another MS of Helen and Anna.

The overlapping sound of Helen's laughter marks a transition to the MS of Helen and Gerry sitting at the table (Fig. 126). This time the far end of the bar is unoccupied. With a cut back to the over-the-shoulder shot of Helen, James leaves the bar in this take (Fig. 127) and soon after, the sequence at the bar ends.

The diegetic music holds together the whole sequence which alternates between the two different versions of the story. Moreover, the two songs played in the bar imply that events in the real and the parallel world actually happen at the same time. Especially with the dolly shot which ends with the FS of Anna in Fig. 123, the transition between the two storylines is achieved in one take maximising the effect of simultaneous action. While Helen and Gerry take their seats at the table, Anna arrives at the bar to comfort her friend. In addition, the sequence incorporates James' character into Helen's main storyline in a very subtle way by pointing at their unconscious encounters as she happens to stand next to James and staggers past him from the FS in Fig. 122.

In the parallel world, Helen separates from Gerry and moves in with Anna, gets her hair cut and literally starts a new life. Helen's changed looks unambiguously complement the visualization of this storyline in which James plays a major role.

The following sequence is taken from the middle of the film. At this point, Helen in the main world is gradually becoming suspicious of Gerry which is expressed in her conversation with Anna. In the other world, Helen and James have started a relationship and the sequence covers one of their first dates when Helen accompanies James to a rowing competition:



Fig. 128



Fig. 129



Fig. 130



Fig. 131



Fig.

132

Non-diegetic music sets out with the first shot of this sequence.

By means of fast cutting, several shots are chained up in a fast-paced way showing a CU of Helen and James's friend cheering, an LS of the boats, shots of the helms and recurring shots of James and Helen. A tracking shot captures the movement of the rowboats. From the MS of James (Fig. 128) a cut to the shot of Helen and James's friend (Fig. 129) is followed by the LS of the boat on the river (Fig. 130). In the same take, the camera pans to the left and captures Helen and Anna walking alongside the bank (Fig. 131).

Helen's implied gaze shot (Fig. 132) is followed by a POV (Fig. 133) where Helen is obviously missing in the frame. With the pan that cues the scene in the real world, the conversation between Helen and Anna sets out. Helen feels that she knew there was a race that day and she wonders about how she could have known that the rowers were wearing striped shirts.

With a cut back to Anna and Helen, the camera moves with them in a pulling shot. Helen speaks out her recent suspicions regarding Gerry's behaviour. During



this take in the real world, the volume of the non-diegetic sound is turned down. With the end of their conversation the camera stops its movement and both Anna and Helen walk off screen. Instantly the non-diegetic music is cranked up and sets out another fast cutting sequence chaining up shots of the rowboat, Helen, and James until the race is finished. The non-diegetic song overlaps to the next shot inside a pub and ends this sequence.

Once again, the crossing of both storylines is held together by the non-diegetic soundtrack suggesting simultaneous action. While Helen is cheering for James in the parallel world, Helen is engaged in a serious conversation with her friend in the real world. Although both storylines unfold in different directions from the beginning, same events thread through each storyline in different order: Helen finds out about Gerry's affair, she gets pregnant, and in the end loses her unborn child in both versions of the story. Each time these two strands cross, the film heavily implies that events in both worlds happen at the same time. Nevertheless, the end of the film opens up another possibility of interpretation. As the beginning of the film implies that catching the train sets out a different version of the story, in the end Helen falls in a coma in both storylines. Once again, non-diegetic music threads throughout the sequence set in the hospital, cutting to and fro between two operating rooms, Gerry, and James waiting in the hall. Both Gerry and James receive the same pieces of information by a doctor and through editing techniques, simultaneity is effected in the same manner as in the previous two examples. In the parallel world, an accident causes the abort of her unborn child, and the final scene is set in her sickroom, when James expresses his feelings for her. With a cut, the story in the real world continues as Helen regains consciousness. Gerry is at her bedside enquiring after her condition and sets out the following sequence:



Fig. 133

Alternating shots between Gerry and Helen end with an XCU of Helen's face (Fig. 133). With the non-diegetic music and Gerry's repeated question whether she could hear him, the frame dissolves into the LS of a bridge (Fig. 134) where Helen and James had their very first date.



Fig. 134



Fig. 135



Fig. 136



Fig. 137



Fig.138

From the LS, the frame dissolves into Helen's XCU (Fig. 135) and instantly into the snack bar, another place she used to go with James (Fig. 135).

From the LS of the snack bar, the frame dissolves into the platform of the station (Fig. 136) and the camera pushes in on the approaching train (Fig. 137). Once again, the frame dissolves into Helen's XCU (Fig. 138). With this final XCU another dissolve shows the hall of the hospital. James walks around the corner to meet his mother's doctor and ends Helen's sequence.

Helen's recurring gaze shots in the XCU and the dissolves into shots of familiar places from the other world all of a sudden imply that these inserted frames visualize her thoughts. Has she been dreaming the other version of the story? Is she recalling something she has been unaware of? In a sense, this final gaze-shot-dissolve sequence resumes Helen's prior feelings at the river bank when she subconsciously knew about the rowing race.

In the final scenes of the film, Helen ends her relationship with Gerry. On her way out of the hospital, it is again implied that chance and coincidence affect the progression of the story. She misses one of the elevators and by chance, James happens to be inside the other one. The film begins and ends in the real world; as the doors to the tube symbolised the gateway to the parallel world while this time, the doors to the elevator mark Helen's entry back to the real world. In either version of the story, it is suggested that she will finally meet James.

In *Lola rennt*, the same story is told in three sequential episodes resulting in three different endings. Similar to *Sliding Doors*, chance encounters with other characters affect the progression in each of the three episodes, while the basic pattern remains the same. The exposition covers a short sequence providing the outset for all three episodes: A phone conversation between Manni and Lola presents Manni's dilemma in a black-and-white flashback sequence covering his story about losing 100.000 DM. This leaves Lola with 20 minutes to scrape the money together in order to save her boyfriend's life. With a CU of Lola in her room, each episode starts out in the same way. In agreement with the self-referential title, Lola's run starts from her room, to her father's bank and ends at the meeting point where Manni is waiting for her. Thus, the main action of each episode is the protagonists' run from one point to another while coincidental crossings with other characters result in each episodes' different endings: Lola dies in episode 1, Manni dies in episode 2 and episode 3 offers a happy ending for the couple but has Lola's father and Mr Meyer die instead. It should be noted, that all characters Lola encounters in episode 1, reappear in both subsequent episodes. Moreover, it is strongly suggested that anything can happen during a short period of time, as encounters with the same character may affect the progression of the story to a greater extent in one episode while remaining a minor event in another. When she starts running out of the apartment and down the staircase, for example, her neighbour trips her in one episode. Lola falls down the stairs which delays her run for some seconds and hence affects the further progression of this episode. Consequently, the feature of cause-and-effect is strongly dependent on other characters and governs Lola's 20 minutes at the story level of each episode.

For the analysis, I have chosen the chance encounter between Lola and Mr Meyer which occurs halfway during her run in all three episodes:

Episode 1:



Fig. 139

Starting from a semi-FS (Fig. 139), the camera captures Lola as she runs towards the camera until she reaches the position of a medium CU. Her gaze shot in the CU is followed by a POV suggesting that Lola



Fig. 140



Fig. 141



Fig. 142



Fig. 143

sees the bonnet of the car moving out of the gate (Fig. 140). This leaves her with enough time to run around the car. With a cut, an LS of the gate shows Mr Meyer in the car and Lola running past (Fig. 141).

With another cut, we are inside Mr Meyer's car. His gaze shot, double framed by the rear-mirror of the car (Fig. 142) is followed by a POV in the next shot, which shows Lola running down the street.

Mr Meyer's inattention causes an accident which is shown in the high-angle crane shot as he bumps into the white car (Fig. 143). In the same take, three thugs get out of the white car. With another cut to Lola, we see how she runs around the corner and Mr Meyer's further storyline is not continued.

## Episode 2:



Fig. 144



Fig. 145



Fig. 146

The same crossing in episode 2 starts with an MS of Lola (Fig. 144). Same as before, Lola runs towards the camera. Again, the eye-line match sequences her gaze shot and the POV (Fig. 145), but this time she is too close to avoid the car.

With the POV the camera pushes in on the car suggesting Lola's running tempo. Through fast cutting three short consecutive shots almost seamlessly show how Lola jumps over the bonnet (Fig. 146) ending with an over-the-shoulder shot of Mr Meyer, implying his gaze shot through the window. The next cut shows exactly the same gaze shot inside the car as in Fig. 142.





Fig. 147

Different to episode 1, this gaze shot is not followed by a POV. Instead, a cut to the high-angle crane shot (Fig. 147) shows the accident, when Mr Meyer bumps into the passing car.

### Episode 3:



Fig. 148



Fig. 149



Fig. 150



Fig. 151



Fig. 152



Fig. 153

Same as in the first two episodes, Lola runs towards the camera (Fig. 148) and the eye-line match adjoins her gaze shot and the POV (Fig. 149). From the POV, a fast cutting sequence chains up several shots from a different angle as Lola is neither able to run around nor jump over the car, until she slows down (Fig. 150), loses her balance and falls onto the bonnet. The combined gaze shot (as seen in the rear-window) and POV of Mr Meyer (Fig. 151) is followed by the POV of Lola as she looks at Mr Meyer through the windscreen (Fig. 152).

A cut adjoins the same high-angle crane shot as in the previous two episodes, but this time, there is no accident as the white car passes Mr Meyer (Fig. 153).

As I mentioned before, Lola encounters the same characters in all three episodes which affects her story to a greater or lesser extent. While her encounters with Mr Meyer in episode 1 & 2 have a minor influence on her story progression, episode 3 plays out a different version of the story.

In episode 3, it is revealed that Mr Meyer is on his way to meet Lola's father. As he is spared the accident, he assumedly drives off right after his short encounter with Lola, while Lola runs off to her father's bank, where she happens to see how her father gets into Mr Meyer's car and denies her any possibility to ask him for help in this version. In the first two episodes, where Mr Meyer is detained by the encounter with the thugs, Lola is thrown out of the bank in episode 1, whereas she robs the bank in episode 2. In episode 3, she wins the money in a casino, while Mr Meyer and Lola's father crash into the white car at a later point in the story. Hence, the film does not simply offer different versions of Lola's story but interweaves the feature of cause-and-effect to all other characters in a similar manner. This is achieved in a very condensed way by showing a fast-cutting montage sequence of every character Lola encounters. The woman with the buggy, for example, is shown to lose her family to social services and consequently steals a baby in a park (ep. 1), winning the jackpot leading the life as a millionaire (ep. 2), or joining a faith community and leading a religious life (ep. 3). These different future sequences reappear with all other characters and additionally give weight to the dominant feature of cause-and-effect in the film. While *Sliding Doors* combined cause-and-effect with the feature of simultaneity, *Lola rennt* combines the feature of repetition and similarity in a significant way. Considering the same basic pattern of all three episodes, the same type of shots reoccur in each episode, such as Mr Meyer's gaze shots or the crane shots in the examples discussed before. The introductory sequence and the transitions between each episode make use of repetition and similarity in a straightforward manner. The introductory sequence is identical in all three episodes:



Fig. 154



Fig. 155

The sequence starts with a CU of Lola's phone (Fig. 154). From there, a cut shows an MS of Lola as she opens the door and runs along the corridor (Fig. 155). The camera tracks her until the off-screen voice of her mother requests her to buy shampoo.



Fig. 156



Fig. 157

The camera changes its direction, dollies into the living room and pushes in on her mother (Fig. 156) until the camera captures her face in a slightly high-angle CU. In the same take, the camera dollies around her until it captures the TV set and pushes in on the TV screen (Fig. 157). With the pushing motion, the frame dissolves into the animated sequence and a cut to a crane shot of the house, the camera captures Lola in a high angle long shot and pans down as she runs towards the camera. Another cut sets out a tracking shot following Lola down the street and from this point onwards different versions of the story unfold. The identical beginning of each episode is clearly a marker of repetition, while the transition sequences are strikingly similar considering their structure. The first episode ends with Lola being shot by a policeman whereas in the second episode Manni is run over by an ambulance car. Either protagonist is lying on the street when the transition begins:

#### Transition 1:



Fig. 158



Fig. 159



Fig. 160

Non-diegetic string music sets out.

Lola's CU gaze shot (Fig. 158) is followed by a POV (Fig. 159), while it is suggested that her POV is Manni's gaze shot (Fig. 159) when the next cut returns to Lola's gaze shot (Fig. 160).

The camera pushes in on her face from the CU to an XCU (Fig. 161). Non-diegetic sound of breaking waves complement the shot.

With the camera movement the colour of the frame changes. The shot fades out into a red frame and fades in a reddish CU of both Lola and Manni in bed, adjoining a short flashback sequence (Fig. 162).



Fig. 161



Fig. 162

With the transition to the CU, there is no more non-diegetic sound.

The flashback sequence starts with Lola's question ("Manni? Do you love me?"). Their conversation gradually turns into a quarrel. At the end, the frame dissolves into Lola's XCU combined with the non-diegetic sound of the waves. The camera pulls out on her back to a CU and non-diegetic sound changes into a fast beat techno track.

## Transition 2:



Fig. 163



Fig. 164



Fig. 165



Fig. 166

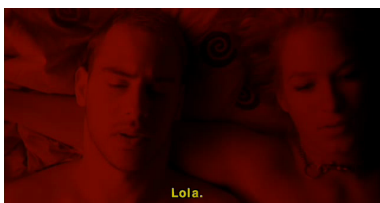


Fig. 167

Same as in transition 1, transition 2 starts with non-diegetic music. This time, the eye-line match sequences Manni's gaze shot (Fig. 163) followed by his POV looking up to Lola implied by the low-angle (Fig. 164). With the cut back to his gaze shot, and Lola's POV (Fig. 165), the camera pushes in on Manni. With the camera movement, the same the non-diegetic string music as in the first transition changes into the sound of breaking waves. With the XCU the frame fades out (Fig. 166) and fades in the CU of Manni and Lola in bed and the second flashback sequence starts (Fig. 167), this time, beginning with Manni's question ("What would you do if I died?"). Similar to the first flashback sequence both end up quarrelling before the frame dissolves back into Manni's XCU. The camera pulls out on him and with a final gaze shot and POV the transition ends.



In a very clear-cut way, both transitions employ the same type of shots, camera movements and non-diegetic music and sounds. The gaze shots from where the camera pushes in on either Lola or Manni as if immersing into their minds is underlined by the non-diegetic sound of the waves and unambiguously point at the subjectivity of the subsequent flashback. In a repetitive manner, both flashbacks begin with the name of the other character and a question that completely changes the atmosphere of the scene. At the end of both transitions, a cut to the CU of Lola's phone cues the next episode. While the feature of cause-and-effect is expressed by showing different variations of the story, the combined employment of repetition and similarity threads throughout the film and points at the structural sameness of each episode. On the other hand, making use of repetition and similarity as visualised in the transitions, they serve the function of ending one version of the story in order to open up another possibility to unfold. To return to Roser's argument, that *Lola rennt* could be compared with a computer game (8), the film repeats the game until both Lola and Manni survive.

#### **6.5. Chance & Coincidence in *Amores Perros* and *New York, I Love You***

As I mentioned in chapter 4.5., chance and coincidence function as important linking elements especially with regards to character constellations. All examples discussed in the film analysis above most certainly interweave these features in a specific manner, nevertheless they remain a minor element compared to the employment of another more dominant feature. *Amores Perros* and *New York, I Love You* strongly make use of chance and coincidence by implying that different characters happen to be at some place which in turn, link the otherwise separate episodes and place them into the context of the whole film.

*Amores Perros* contains three sequential episodes telling the story of Octavio & Susana, Daniel & Valeria, and El Chivo & Maru set in a neighbourhood in Mexico City. Superimposed titles of the characters' names mark the beginning of each episode. The exposition starts in medias res; a car chase and an accident which connects these three distinct storylines ends with a fade-out to a black screen and a fade-in of the first episode's title. At this point, it is not clear why

Octavio is being chased by the thugs, and how the accident connects and affects the other two storylines. The employment of chance and coincidence - the fact that Octavio, Valeria and Chivo happen to be at that specific junction - is an important part of each episode's narrative: Octavio plans to run off with his sister-in-law, Susana. To save enough money, he starts to participate in several dog fights which quickly earn him a considerable amount. His rival, the head of a dog fighting gang, is more than annoyed by Octavio's boosting success and shoots Octavio's dog. In a rage, Octavio stabs his rival and the gang chase him across the city when Octavio jumps the red light at the junction and crashes into a crossing car. Valeria is a successful supermodel who has an affair with Daniel. Daniel leaves his family to start a new life with Valeria and early in the second episode, he surprises her in a new apartment by informing her about his separation from his wife. To celebrate their new beginning, Valeria drives off to get some wine and on her way, Octavio crashes into her car. She is severely wounded and as a consequence, she has to give up her career in the course of her storyline. Chivo strolls through the streets of Mexico City. His vagrant appearance would never reveal his former profession as a hitman. A disloyal police officer introduces him to a businessman who offers him a "job" to kill his partner. Chivo follows his target across the city until he happens to witness the accident from the other side of the street. It is implied that each protagonist is at the junction by pure chance and the accident, which is most certainly the central event affecting the story in each episode, is shown each time from a different viewpoint:

#### Episode 1:



Fig. 168



Fig. 169

Through fast-cutting, Octavio's chase scene combines a number of consecutive shots adjoined effecting the fast-paced tempo of the chase which is underlined by the non-diegetic music.

His gaze shot (Fig. 168) is followed by a POV (Fig. 169). The traffic light has turned red. A fast cut to an LS of Octavio's car shows how close the followers have come (Fig. 170).



Fig. 170



Fig. 171



Fig. 172



Fig. 173

In the same take, the bonnet of Valeria's car appears on the right side of the frame when another fast cut switches to Octavio's car (Fig. 171) as he accelerates to cross the junction. From the external shot of Octavio's car (Fig. 172), a cut changes into Octavio's POV (Fig. 173) as he approaches Valeria's car. In the same take, the camera pushes in on the crossing car and with the crash, the frame fades out and the overlapping sound from a TV show fades in the shot of the TV studio and ends Octavio's episode. Considering the tempo of this sequence, the fade-out and the following fade-in abruptly ends the first episode.

## Episode 2:



Fig. 174



Fig. 175



Fig. 176

From a POV inside Valeria's car, the camera captures the car driving ahead of her and Chivo walking on the pavement. The camera tracks the movement of the car and pans to the left suggesting that Valeria is looking out of the window as she passes Chivo (Fig. 174). Similar as before, a gaze shot of Valeria (Fig. 175) is followed by a POV (Fig. 176) in her eye-line match.

The diegetic music during these shots is a song played on the radio to which she hums the tune.



Fig. 177



Fig. 178

A cut changes to the LS of the street. In this take Octavio's car crashes into her car from the right side of the frame (Fig. 177). On impact the camera pans to the left which captures Chivo's crash (Fig. 178). The camera remains in this position until the frame fades out and fades in the title of the third episode.

### Episode 3:



Fig. 179



Fig. 180



Fig. 181



Fig. 182



Fig. 183

How Chivo made his way to the junction is revealed in episode 2 during the short crossing when Valeria drives past. In his storyline, he is pursuing the target who is having lunch near the junction. Chivo's gaze shot (Fig. 179) is followed by the POV (Fig. 180) looking at the business partner he should kill. With a cut back to his gaze shot, the camera captures Valeria's and Octavio's car in the background of the frame. In the same take, Octavio crashes into Valeria's car (Fig. 181). Following the crash, the camera slightly pans to the left (Fig. 182) and remains in this position until Chivo is captured in a frontal MS. In a pulling shot, Chivo walks towards the cars until another cut changes into an over-the-shoulder shot and the camera tracks his walk to Octavio's car (Fig. 183). The accident occurs in the middle of episode 3 and Chivo's storyline simply continues after the crash.

The accident does not just connect these three storylines in a loose way, but evidences two other features which are significantly employed at this point. First of all, the feature of multiple perspectives by telling the story of the accident from different viewpoints repeats the same event three times leaving aside its presentation in the exposition. In addition, it is suggested that all three storylines unfold simultaneously when at some point during each storyline, the protagonists' paths happen to cross at the junction. This is clearly evidenced when Valeria drives past Chivo, which is reprised in his episode when he walks down the pavement in pursuit of his target. Another instance pointing at parallel action occurs in Octavio's episode, when his friend watches a live talk show on TV. The guests of the show turn out to be Valeria and an actor with whom she is having an alleged relationship for publicity effects. With this scene in Octavio's room, Octavio and his friend leave for the dog fight which ends with the stabbing and the car chase. Valeria's episode starts in the studio of the live talk show with the overlapping introduction which ends Octavio's episode. While these two protagonists' storylines unfold, Chivo's assignment runs in parallel.

In this sense, chance and coincidence, multiple perspectives, and simultaneity function as linking elements of the otherwise disconnected storylines. Thematically, loss and loyalty, as symbolised by the dogs which are of major importance to all three protagonists, thread throughout the film and connect these separate stories in a different way. Although each episode's title is given at the beginning, the focus is predominantly on Octavio, Valeria and Chivo in each story. Their counterparts, Susana, Daniel, and Maru, symbolise the motivation, expectation and strive for happiness that generate the protagonists' lives. But loyalty turns into disloyalty, as Susana runs away with her husband and rejects Octavio after all. Valeria loses one leg in the accident, and the loss of her beauty gradually puts Daniel off, while Chivo was declared dead by his family and his will to reconcile with his daughter Maru is denied.

*New York, I Love You* is structured into 11 sequential episodes with interlocking transition sequences, which significantly employ the feature of chance and coincidence. While the episodes themselves are self-contained and clearly



distinct from each other, some protagonists reappear in transitions which can be considered as small sketches or short stories of their own. In addition to these transitions, long shots and aerial shots of the city establish the scene and especially set the time of day, where some adjoined episodes are set at nighttime while others are set in broad daylight. The film starts with a short introductory scene in a cab already employing two characters who will reappear in their respective episodes at a later point. From there, the film sequences alternate between an episode and a transition until the final episode is followed by an epilogue, which is set in an open air documentary screening showing short scenes and snapshots of all preceding episodes. Zoe, the documentary filmer reappears in most transitions and it is suggested from the beginning that creating a film about the city and its people is part of her storyline which is repeatedly taken up in these inserted sequences. To exemplify my aforementioned argument that chance and coincidence are closely related to character constellations, the following sections show Zoe's transition sequences where she happens to encounter one of the other protagonists:

The transition between episode 2 and 3 introduces Zoe for the first time. The sequence is set in a cab where Zoe and the driver start a short conversation:

Transition Ep.2 – Ep. 3:

Zoe & Gus



Fig. 184

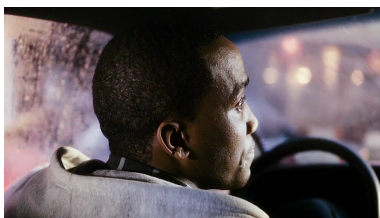


Fig. 185



Fig. 186

Two shot-reverse-shot sequences at the beginning of the episode cover the conversation about the music the driver is playing in the car. Zoe asks him to drive across the city while she films with his music. With the final gaze shot (Fig. 184) and POV (Fig. 185), a cut captures Zoe in an MS. In this take, another passenger gets in the cab realizing too late that the cab is occupied (Fig. 186). She offers to take him to his destination.

The sequence ends when the passenger looks at Zoe filming out of the window (Fig. 187). With a jump cut the transition ends and sets off the third episode.



Fig. 187

At this point in the film, the viewer is already familiar with the passenger. He is one of the two characters in the exposition, where, in a similar way, he happens to enter a cab with another passenger.

The passenger will reappear as the protagonist of episode 5, when he is on his way to a date and contemplating after all if he should wait for the woman he has met only recently.

Transition Ep. 3 – Ep. 4:

Zoe & Rifka



Fig. 188



Fig. 189

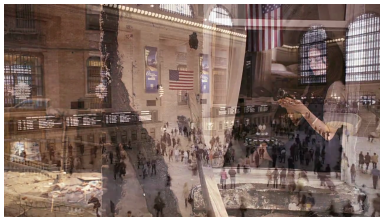


Fig. 190

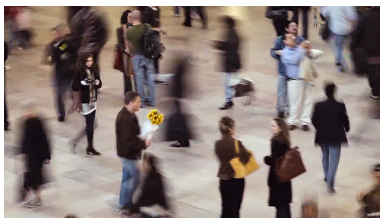


Fig. 191

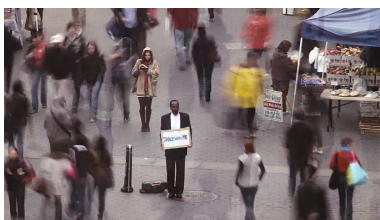


Fig. 192

From the last shot of episode 3, a jump cut shows an LS of the skyline and non-diegetic music sets out (Fig. 188). The camera pans to the right and dissolves into the next shot still continuing the rightwards pan and slightly pulling out on the window. The camera movement stops when Zoe is captured in an FS (Fig. 189). Her gaze shot, and the object she is filming is not shown but the frame instantly dissolves into the next frame which is a fast motion shot at the station (Fig. 190). With another dissolve the camera moves closer to Zoe, capturing her while she is filming the people at the station (Fig. 191). The camera pans horizontally moving alongside Zoe as she films the man with the sunflowers. Diegetic sounds of the arrival hall are added to the non-diegetic music. Another dissolve changes into an LS in the streets, once again shown in fast motion (Fig. 192). This time, Zoe films from her stationary position and the camera does not move throughout the shot.



Fig. 193



Fig. 194



Fig. 195



Fig. 196



Fig. 197



Fig. 198

With another dissolve, the frame changes into the crane shot in fig. 193. The camera pans down and captures Zoe, filming the wedding couple (Fig. 194). In the same take the camera pans to the right and captures Rifka in an LS, as she walks towards the benches (Fig. 195). The overlapping sound of a ringing mobile phone provides a sound bridge to a CU of Rifka (Fig. 196). The following shots show how Rifka meets her husband and both walk off together. The LS of the couple dissolves into the next shot which adjoins a short sequence of the camera tracking through the streets of the city by night (Fig. 197).

Rifka is the protagonist of the second episode, which mainly tells the story of her wedding. Although we do not see Zoe's face, the non-diegetic music and the rightwards pan to Rifka's FS suggest that Zoe is filming Rifka's short scene with her husband.

The transition ends with a CU (Fig. 198) of the call girl and sets out the fourth episode.

Making use of dissolves and fast motion in this transition has the effect of covering different places in a short timespan, especially summarizing Zoe's action of filming at the station and in the streets. The continuous camera movement at the riverside, suggesting Zoe's POV captured with her camera, implies that she happens to film Rifka by chance. The final dissolve provides a



fast switch to nighttime where the fourth episode is set, telling the story of a chance encounter between the callgirl and the writer.

Transition Ep. 6- Ep. 7:

Zoe & the writer

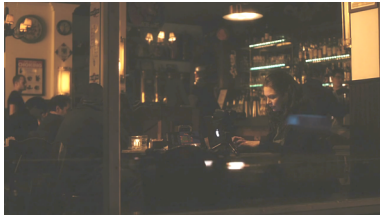


Fig. 199



Fig. 200

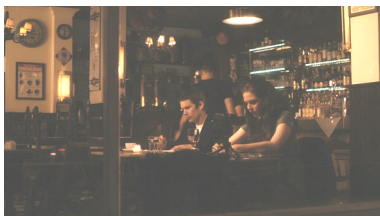


Fig. 201

The same non-diegetic music as in the transition between episode 3 & 4 starts with the shot of Zoe through the window of a café. Similar as before, dissolves change the shot, suggesting that Zoe is sitting in the café for a while (Fig. 199 & 200).

With the dissolve into the shot in Fig. 201, the writer from episode 4 is sitting next to Zoe. A cut brings us inside the café where they start a short conversation about her camera. While Zoe leaves her table, the writer leaves the café and positions himself in front of her camera showing her what he has been working on.

The non-diegetic music stops during the scene inside the café and starts again when the writer stands in front of the camera. Hence, the sound provides an auditory frame to this transition. With a final MS of Zoe inside the café the frame dissolves into an LS of the skyline and ends the non-diegetic music. The LS which is held in fast motion, changes from night to daytime and cues the first shot of episode 7.

The transition between episode 9 and 10 covers a short encounter between Zoe and the callgirl from episode 4. It is raining and upon seeing Zoe, the callgirl crosses the street and offers to share her umbrella with Zoe. During their short conversation, the call girl remarks having seen her filming in the café.

Transition Ep. 9- Ep. 10:

Zoe & the callgirl



Fig. 202

With the transition, the same non-diegetic music as in Zoe's previous sequence sets out. In the MS of both (Fig. 202), the callgirl's question ("Aren't you the one who's always filming in the coffeeshop?") bleeds over and marks a transition



Fig. 203



Fig. 204



Fig. 205

to two consecutive shots while their dialog continues in voice-overs: from the shot in Fig. 203, the camera slowly tilts up to the callgirl's knees, and with a cut a pan from right to left ends with the CU shown in Fig. 204. A cut back to both women continues their conversation on screen in a pulling shot while they are walking. The camera stops its movement and both walk off the screen in this take. A cut sequences two other shots of the call girl, first an XCU (Fig. 205) which is followed by an MS. The non-diegetic music bleeds over with a dissolve to the next shot and ends with the first diegetic sound of a man opening the door of a restaurant.

The transition ends with the LS of the restaurant and the man stepping onto the pavement which sets out episode 10. It is not quite clear in this transition, whether these inserted shots of the call girl visualise a flashback or anticipate some future event when Zoe will film her. Their conversation which is mainly about Zoe's filming implies that either version might be possible.

At the end of the film, Zoe's final chance encounter with the Chinese girl, the protagonist of episode 9, connects the transition with the epilogue.

Transition Ep.11 – Epilogue:  
Zoe & the Chinese girl



Fig. 206



Fig. 207

The sequence starts somewhere in Chinatown, where the girl happens to see a street artist's performance in the neighbourhood. An over-the-shoulder shot of the girl which captures the artist, is followed by the shot of Zoe's camera (Fig. 206). With this shot, the same non-diegetic music as before sets out. The shot of Zoe's camera could be considered her extended gaze shot which is followed by the POV on the display of her camcorder (Fig. 207).



Fig. 208



Fig. 209



Fig. 210



Fig. 211



Fig. 212

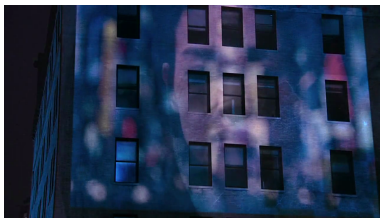


Fig. 213



Fig. 214

From the CU of the display, the camera tilts up and captures the girl in a MS (Fig. 208). The tilt implies that Zoe looks up herself moving her eyes from the display to the girl. In this take, the girl realizes that she is being filmed which sets out a shot-reverse-shot sequence capturing both looking at each other alternating between Zoe's MS (Fig. 209) and the girl's MS (Fig. 210). With another cut, the camera has moved closer and captures Zoe in a CU which is followed by a CU of the girl. The next shot eventually shows them together in a café. The camera captures them from a stationary position while the girl films Zoe and hands over the camera. Once again, Zoe's gaze shot (Fig. 211) is followed by a POV, an XCU of the girl's face (Fig. 212). From this shot, the frame dissolves into the next shot, which shows her face projected onto a façade. The dissolve ends the transition and sets out the epilogue. Zoe has finished her documentary which is shown outdoors as projected on the surrounding house fronts of a patio (Fig 213). Several consecutive shots show a selection of different scenes from all episodes until the camera pans to the right and captures the skyline of the city in an LS (Fig. 214). A fade-out to a black screen ends the non-diegetic music and fades in the end credits.

Zoe's story and her chance encounters are not just linking different episodes but could be considered an episode in its own right, which unfolds in recurring modes of presentation throughout the film. The conversations with other characters briefly characterise her while none of these encounters are developed in more detail. Apart from the transition in the cab which is complemented by the diegetic music on the radio, all of her transition sequences make use of the same non-diegetic music providing a leitmotif that connects the split up parts of her story.

In both films, the use of chance and coincidence is an important part at the level of the whole film, linking separate storylines, while the deployment of the feature is performed in different ways. In *Amores Perros* chance and coincidence lead to the one-time dramatic accident which directly involves two protagonists, while it affecting the further progression of all three storylines. In *New York, I Love You*, however, chance and coincidence thread throughout the film as all transitions make use of protagonists who happen to meet each other by chance. Nonetheless, the feature, as employed in both films, is clearly based on possibilities that different people may get to know each other in the restricted setting of a neighbourhood.

#### **6.6. Repetition and Similarity in *Babel* and *Women Love Women***

The feature of repetition and similarity has been outlined in the previous subchapters as a combinative element which adds to the overall outlook of each film. Stylistic similarities between separate episodes, repetitive shots, and repetition of events as seen from different protagonists in their respective episodes clearly point at the frequent occurrence of these two features which predominantly have the function of linking different storylines. For the analysis, I chose *Babel* and *Women Love Women* which employ these two features in a conspicuous manner, not just on a stylistic level but also considering the themes of each episode and consequently the whole film.

*Babel* tells the story of three different character groups in interlocking mode which are set in different parts of the world: Richard, Susan and two local boys in Morocco, Amelia, Mike and Debbie in Mexico, Chieko and her father in Tokyo. Each episode makes use of miscommunication and the protagonists' inability to express their needs which lead to misconception and misunderstandings in each storyline. This thematic similarity spreads over the film and significantly connects the episodes, while the employment of repetition fulfils a subtle function of anticipating and revealing important elements at the level of each episodes' narrative. Two goatherds test a rifle which was given to them by their father, when, accidentally, one shot severely wounds Susan. Waiting for medical care in a secluded Moroccan village, Richard has to overcome language barriers not only with the local people but all the same with the other members of their tour group. Amelia, Richard and Susan's housekeeper, has to take their children, Mike and Debbie, to Mexico to her son's wedding as she cannot find anyone to take care of them. As a consequence of her nephew's thoughtless action at the U.S. border, a chain of cause-and-effect has her end up at a police station, trying to prove that Mike and Debbie were left in her care. Nonetheless, her assertions lead to profound misunderstandings with the officer who reveals her illegal stay in the United States and predicts an upcoming deportation to Mexico. Chieko, the deaf-mute girl in Tokyo, struggles to cope with her mother's suicide and her disability to express her feelings especially towards her father. The first and the second storyline are loosely linked when Chieko's storyline is causally connected to the rifle, which her father left with a Moroccan farmer after a successful hunting trip in the past. Nevertheless, these storylines unfold in separate ways as none of the events in one storyline affect the progression in the other.

The film begins in Morocco, covering the exposition where a local farmer buys the rifle from his neighbour and instructs his two sons to protect the herd from the jackals. The episode ends when the boys fire shots at the tour bus which comes to a halt. A jump cut brings us to the second storyline, while the final shot of episode 1 and the first shot of episode 2 are strikingly similar:



Fig. 215



Fig. 216



Fig. 217

Upon realising that they have hit their target, a reaction shot showing a CU of their faces is followed by a cut to the tracking shot where the boys run away (Fig. 215). The diegetic sound of their footsteps bleeds over to the next shot. The overlapping sound turns into diegetic sound as Mike runs across the living room to hide behind the sofa (Fig. 216). The similarity of both shots and the identical diegetic sound and action seamlessly visualises the jump cut from one place to another. In the first scenes of this episode, Amelia receives a phone call (Fig. 217) which sets out the exposition of the second storyline.

This phone call does not just constitute the second storyline's beginning, but is shown fairly early in the whole film. While the caller is not shown, his off-screen voice can be heard in the scenes. The conversation between Amelia and Richard anticipates that something has happened to Susan as Amelia enquires after her condition and Richard requests her not to tell their children.

The shooting is shown from Richard and Susan's perspective inside the tour bus after a jump cut from the second storyline. When Richard realises that Susan is wounded, another jump cut starts the sequence in Tokyo. All three character groups have been introduced now. From there on, each storyline is developed in alternating mode. The father of the goatherds informs his family about the accident which assumedly killed an American tourist and was considered a terrorist attack by the local police. Richard and Susan end up in the secluded village, the hometown of their tourguide, desperately waiting for an ambulance. Amelia has to take Mike and Debbie with her as Susan's sister cannot take care of the children. The events in Morocco are interwoven into Chieko's storyline in the following way:





Fig. 218



Fig. 219

Chieko is waiting for her friend to pick her up. Zapping through the TV channels, she happens to see a news program which mentions a terrorist attack in Morocco (Fig. 218). From the LS, a cut changes the camera position. A gaze shot, implied by her face in the mirror is combined with the POV shot of the TV screen showing the younger one of the two goatherds (Fig. 219).

Thus, the boys' action has a direct effect on Susan and Richard, and is repeated in Amelia's storyline through the phone call. It is also repeated by the account of the goatherds' father and again taken up in Chieko's storyline, which remains of minor interest to her. In the third storyline, the local police try to contact Chieko's father, while Chieko misconceives their investigation as being related to her mother's suicide. In parallel, the Moroccan police try to find the shooter which leads them to the farmer's house who sold the rifle to his neighbour. Upon explaining how the farmer obtained the rifle in the first place, he requests his wife to show them a picture which was taken years ago:



Fig. 220



Fig. 221

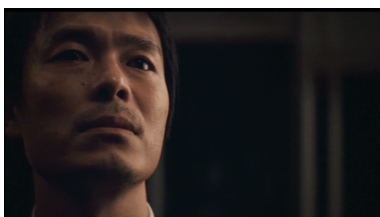


Fig. 222

The officer's gaze shot (Fig. 220) from a low angle is followed by a cut to his POV (Fig. 221). The picture shows the farmer and Chieko's father with the rifle. All of a sudden, the events in Morocco connect the third storyline to a greater extent. The farmer explains the background of a hunting trip after which his Japanese visitor gave him the rifle out of gratitude. The revelation about Chieko's father, the farmer and the rifle in the first storyline takes place in the middle of the film and is taken up again at a later point in the third storyline, this time as seen from the Japanese



Fig. 223

Police officer's perspective. Similar to before, a gaze shot (Fig. 222) is followed by a POV (Fig. 223) where he happens to see the same picture.

Upon leaving, the officer meets Chieko's father who tells him the same story about the hunting trip in Morocco, the local farmer and the rifle.

The phone call between Amelia and Richard from the beginning of the film is reprised again at the end, this time as part of Richard's storyline:



Fig. 224

Amelia's voice is only heard off-screen, while Richard is captured in a CU throughout the phone conversation (Fig. 224).

The phone call and the employment of the news program in Chieko's storyline are not just part of the narrative but offer additional information about the timeline of the film, suggesting that events are partly overlapping in all three storylines. Richard's phone call happens at the end of the film, and kicks off Amelia's storyline while Chieko's story unfolds in parallel.

Reconsidering the employment of repetition and similarity in *The Hours* or *Lola rennt*, the occurrences in *Babel* are most certainly less frequent and expressed in a subtle way. Nevertheless, the repetitive account of the shooting, either by the characters or as taken up in radio programs and on TV, significantly implies that the event is part of all three character groups. All the more, making use of both features underlines parts of the story which were only anticipated before, especially connecting these three storylines not just thematically but also at the level of each story.

*Women Love Women* is structured into three sequential self-contained episodes set in 1961, 1972 and 2000. Each episode tells the story of a homosexual couple and the struggle, the societal reaction and rejection towards them, while each story contributes to show the change of homosexual love over time at the level of the whole film: (1) Abbie and Edith have to hide their relationship from everyone as homosexual love is far from being accepted in 1961. (2) Linda, the founder of



a homosexual study group falls in love with Amy but comes to question herself about the sincerity of her feelings as she has troubles showing her affection for Amy in public. (3) Fran and Kal desperately wish to have a baby but struggle with their decision as they fear prejudices and societal rejection against their child. Apart from the similar theme which threads through each episode and spans the entire film, the episodes are connected by clear-cut transitions which are structured in a remarkably repetitive way:



Fig. 225



Fig. 226



Fig. 227



Fig. 228



Fig. 229

The opening sequence begins with a split screen showing three different columns held in black & white, sepia, and colour from the left side of the screen respectively. These split sections of the frame show archive footage of TV commercials, newsreels, and amateur video material representing contemporary issues of each time. At this point, the time in which the episodes are set is not clear but suggested by the different colour composition of each section on the screen. With a cut, an LS of a house anticipates the setting of the film, still keeping the threefold colour design (Fig. 225) superimposing the title of the film. Another archive sequence sets out until a wipe from the first column spreads over the whole screen (Fig. 226). The non-diegetic music fades out with the wipe and a Doris Day song begins which continues throughout the following black-and-white sequence and the LS of the house (Fig. 227). The year is superimposed and the frame changes from black and white to colour. With a fade-out to a black screen, the song



Fig. 230



Fig. 231



Fig. 232



Fig. 233

ends and fades in the first shot of the first episode. At the end of the first episode, the camera captures Edith's empty room in an LS. With the beginning of a non-diegetic song, a wipe from the right side of the frame evolves into the three columns as before, setting out another archive sequence (Fig. 228). With a wipe to both sides, the second column spreads over the whole screen (Fig. 229) and sets out a sequence held in sepia, showing footage of protests and demonstrations of women's rights groups. A cut shows the same house as before from the same angle in the LS, while the mise-en-scène implies that time has passed (Fig. 230). Same as before, the year is superimposed and with the overlapping sound of a conversation a cut to the next shot starts the second episode.

At the end of the second episode the same pattern is applied again. A wipe from both sides of the screen end in three differently coloured columns, complemented by another diegetic song (Fig. 231). With another wipe starting from the right side, the third column spreads over the screen (Fig. 232) showing a sequence of protests of homosexual groups and opponents, amateur videos of same-gender weddings, and interviews of couples. The sequence ends with the LS of the house and the superimposed year while overlapping diegetic music from the next shot starts the third episode (Fig. 233).

In this sense, the pattern which connects these three episodes is basically the same from the very beginning. From a split screen, a wipe sequences contemporary archive material complemented by a song assigned to each time, ending with the LS of the house and the superimposed year in which the episode's story is set. Apart from the fact that all three character groups are the tenants of the very same house, each story is set in a different time and no other

causal connection between these separate storylines is offered. To underline the thematic leitmotif between each episode, the features of repetition and similarity as evidenced in the transitions affect the symmetric presentation and connect the episodes in a visual way.

The employment of repetition and similarity is obviously different in *Babel* compared to *Women Love Women*. In *Babel*, the thematic similarity most certainly outweighs stylistic similarities. Nevertheless, the repeated account of one event and the subtle way these two features are interwoven in each storyline connect the episodes and place them into the context of a whole. *Women Love Women* could be perceived as a collection of three short films. Owing to the stylistic repetition and similarity of the transitions, the film connects these separate stories in an unambiguous way.

## 6.7. Summary

The discussion of these 12 films has shown how the features of simultaneity, times and places, multiple perspectives, cause-and-effect, chance & coincidence, and repetition & similarity are interwoven in the plot and visualised. Most examples evidenced the combinative employment of several features in one film. While these 12 films are fairly different considering their narrative, and thus clearly distinguishable from other genre films which are dominantly defined by their content, the analysis revealed similarities between the films under discussion. Stylistic elements which express the feature of simultaneity in *Short Cuts* and *Magnolia* are also applied in *Babel*, while different perspectives as discussed in *Vantage Point* and *11:14* point at simultaneity in a clear-cut way. The feature of perspectives which effects repetition as a consequence of telling the same story from a different viewpoint is also interwoven in *Amores Perros* when all three protagonists are causally connected by chance and coincidence. Chance and coincidence, which remain a minor element in some films, are interwoven in *Lola rennt* as the basis for telling three different versions of one and the same story which significantly affects the feature of cause-and effect, whereas it is the most important feature and linking element in *New York, I Love*

*You*. Repetition and similarity occurred either at the level of the narrative or as repetitive and similar stylistic elements. In *The Red Violin* all episodes start out with the maid's gaze shot and / or her voice-overs, assigning her an important role in the plot, while the stylistic repetition of starting different episodes with similar shots, lines of dialog and the same non-diegetic music as discussed in *The Hours* represents an instance of stylistic repetition. Nevertheless, both contribute to expressing the feature of times and places. There were occurrences of structurally similar transitions as discussed in *Vantage Point*, *11:14*, *Lola rennt*, or *Women Love Women*. In a different way, these two features are applied as interwoven parts of one storyline which are repeated in another storyline in form of events perceived or recounted by different protagonists.

Ergo, making use of one (dominant) feature unambiguously assigns one or more other features. While each film employs one of these features in a dominant way, the combination with another feature significantly links separate storylines no matter if the film is structured into sequential or interlocking episodes:

The non-diegetic music, the repetitive shots of the helicopters and the TV program link all character groups in *Short Cuts*. The voice-overs and the identical camera movement link all character groups in *Magnolia* in a similar way, while the most dominant feature in both films remains the feature of simultaneity. Recurring shots of the maid in between each episode link different storylines making use of her narration in *The Red Violin*, while non-diegetic music and repetition link all three storylines in *The Hours* and connect different times and places as employed in both films. *Vantage Point* and *11:14* combine the feature of perspectives with simultaneity, chance & coincidence, and repetition & simultaneity adding information to the film's story with each episode. Although the dominant feature remains the feature of perspective, as each episode limits itself to the viewpoint of the protagonist, one event is perceived, because it happens to take place at the same time. This alone links different protagonists whose paths cross, while both films additionally make use of clear-cut transition sequences.

*Sliding Doors* adds the feature of chance & coincidence as the trigger for unfolding two versions of the story, while editing and the non-diegetic music affect the simultaneity of both storylines almost seamlessly alternating between

the real world and the parallel world. *Lola rennt* combines cause-and-effect with chance & coincidence as the encounters with other characters generate three different possible endings of the story. The repetition and similarity of the transitions underline the same basic pattern of each episode and lead to the end of one version in order to set out another one.

Chance & coincidence in *Amores Perros* is most certainly combined with simultaneity and both features link the otherwise separate storylines in the dramatic accident which is expressed by the feature of different perspectives. *New York, I Love You* links each episode with its dominant feature of chance & coincidence while recurring protagonists in these transitions may be assigned an instance of repetition. *Babel* links thematic similarity and repeated accounts of the shooting with simultaneity as the news spreads around the world and is perceived by Chieko until the causal connection between all three storylines is fully revealed at the end. *Women Love Women* combines thematic repetition with different times and connects each episode with the structurally similar transition. In this manner, episodic films interweave one of the characteristic features as part of the narrative, but in addition use them as linking elements which connect separate stories and establish a network of narratives operating in the context of one piece of film.

## Conclusion

The paper started out with a general discussion of genre and turned to the specific aim to delineate the category of episodic films as a separate genre.

The major genre categories such as the western, the musical, or the horror film which predominantly apply one conventional type of story in combination with significant inner and outer forms, are most certainly grouped in a more clear-cut, unambiguous way. I pointed at the variety of outputs which can be categorised as episodic films starting from the chains of short sketches, to more lengthy storylines which, considering their story, could be classified as a different genre. Reconsidering the films which I discussed in the film analysis, they do not tell similar stories, nor are they marked by recurring visual conventions. *Babel* could be labelled as a drama, *Sliding Doors* as a romantic comedy, *Vantage Point* as a political thriller, or *Women Love Women* as a women's film. Nevertheless they share the episodic structure and, moreover, make use of the six characteristic features which were discussed in more detail.

Leaning on Derrida's claim that individual texts subsumed under a genre category must show common codes and traits (see 229), Ryall's statement about genre marker and conventions (see Neale 2000: 12) and Tudor's opinion on general audience perception (7), the main focus was to outline the features and conventional markers that constitute the genre of episodic films. As the second chapter indicated, there is no clear-cut definition of "episodic films", as different authors delineate this type of film in different ways, which describe the characteristics of these films in a quite narrowed manner. Monaco's definition covers the self-contained chain of episodes, connected by a common feature which could be certainly ascribed to *Lola rennt*, *New York, I Love You*, and *Women Love Women*. Pramaggiore's statement about the "day in the life" quality is obviously found in *Short Cuts*, *Magnolia*, *Vantage Point*, and *11:14* which cover a short timespan of each protagonist's life. Bordwell's viewpoint that network tales make use of interplays between fantasy and reality is clearly employed in *Sliding Doors* and *Lola rennt*. In this sense, none of these definitions

cover the whole range of episodic films. By outlining the differences between the classic structure and the episodic structure, I pointed at the first characteristic marker which is the structural pattern that manifests the bedrock convention of episodic films.

With Lommel's discussion of recurring features in episodic films (130) to which I added two more categories, as I repeatedly discovered their occurrence, I offer the following definition: episodic films contain at least two storylines which can be structured into sequential or interlocking mode, either showing the episodes one after the other in a chain, or in alternation by means of cross cutting to and fro between different episodes. Each episode and each protagonist must be given equal share in the film which is clearly distinct from the classic structure with its focus on one protagonist's progression in the story. The features of simultaneity, times and places, multiple perspectives, cause-and-effect, chance & coincidence, and repetition & similarity are repeatedly interwoven into the narrative structure of episodic films. One of these features is used in a dominant way while possibly occurring in combination with another. In addition, these features serve the purpose of connecting separate storylines and hence, to establish narrative networks which are placed into the context of a film. These networks, in turn, enable the viewer to perceive and understand not only chains of vignettes but also multiple protagonist plots as one piece of film text rather than a collection of short films. In this context, Treber commented on the confusion and disorder which results from the episodic structure and the overabundance of plotlines which, in his view strongly demands for connecting elements in form of unifying themes, repetitive elements and stylistic techniques (23). While the films which were discussed in the film analysis are strikingly different considering their narrative content, it could be observed that each film makes use of unifying elements in the form of stylistic elements such as repetitive shots, camera movements, non-diegetic music and voice-overs, as was evident in the interlocking examples such as *Short Cuts*, *Magnolia*, or *The Hours*, overreaching themes as in *Babel*, or with clear-cut transitions as in *Lola rennt* and *Women Love Women*.

To return to my initially raised question, if episodic films can be considered a genre at all, I strongly argue that the format constitutes its own genre. Admittedly, the arrays of outputs are as diverse as are their stories. This affects genre hybridization and tempts to assign individual films to a different class of genre. A lack of visual conventions and no general form which spreads over the genre added to my preliminary doubt.

All the same, these missing characteristics of living up to the expected plot, the clearly-defined outer and inner forms or, in other words, the iconography, that define most major genres are significantly replaced by the following three elements which, in my view, constitute the genre of episodic films: the episodic structure, the employment of characteristic and hence conventional features which consequently establish narrative networks.



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## Table of Figures

### Short Cuts

Figure 1 – 4 .....	50
Figure 5 – 9 .....	51
Figure 10 – 13 .....	52
Figure 14 – 15 .....	53
Figure 16 – 17 .....	54
Figure 18 – 21 .....	55
Figure 22 .....	56

### Magnolia

Figure 23 – 27 .....	57
Figure 28 – 33 .....	58
Figure 34 – 39 .....	59
Figure 40 .....	60

### The Red Violin

Figure 41 – 44 .....	61
Figure 45 – 49 .....	62
Figure 50 – 54 .....	63
Figure 55 – 56 .....	64

### The Hours

Figure 57 – 60 .....	65
Figure 61 – 66 .....	66
Figure 67 – 71 .....	67
Figure 72 – 74 .....	68
Figure 75 – 81 .....	69

### Vantage Point

Figure 82 – 85 .....	72
Figure 86 – 90 .....	73
Figure 91 – 93 .....	74
Figure 94 – 97 .....	75

### 11:14

Figure 98 – 103 .....	77
Figure 104 – 109 .....	78
Figure 110 – 115 .....	79

### Sliding Doors

Figure 116 – 117 .....	82
Figure 118 – 123 .....	83
Figure 124 – 127 .....	84
Figure 128 – 132 .....	85
Figure 133 .....	86
Figure 134 – 138 .....	87

### Lola rennt

Figure 139 .....	88
Figure 140 – 146 .....	89
Figure 147 – 153 .....	90
Figure 154 – 155 .....	91
Figure 156 – 160 .....	92
Figure 161 – 167 .....	93

### Amores Perros

Figure 168 – 169 .....	95
Figure 170 – 176 .....	96
Figure 177 – 183 .....	97

### New York, I Love You

Figure 184 – 186 .....	99
Figure 187 – 192 .....	100
Figure 193 – 198 .....	101
Figure 199 – 202 .....	102
Figure 203 – 207 .....	103
Figure 208 – 214 .....	104

**Babel**

Figure 215 .....	106
Figure 216 – 218 .....	107
Figure 219 – 223 .....	108
Figure 224 .....	109

**Women Love Women**

Figure 225 – 230 .....	110
Figure 231 – 233 .....	111



## Index

- 21 Grams*, 21, 29, 116
- Altman, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 22, 28, 117
- Amores Perros*, 3, 36, 40, 47, 92, 103, 110, 112, 116
- audience, 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 23, 28, 45, 52, 55, 113
- audience Perception, 17
- Babel*, 21, 25, 35, 36, 47, 103, 107, 110, 112, 113, 114, 116
- Bobby*, 3, 24, 31, 36, 116
- Bordwell, 1, 5, 12, 21, 22, 26, 27, 31, 44, 113, 117
- cause-and-effect, 33, 38, 79, 86, 89, 92, 104, 110, 111, 114
- chance, 4, 29, 33, 39, 40, 41, 79, 80, 85, 86, 92, 93, 96, 99, 101, 102, 103, 110, 111, 112, 114
- characteristic features, 1, 5, 28, 29, 33, 45, 46, 47, 112
- classical narrative structure, 14
- Coffee & Cigarettes*, 3, 29, 41, 116
- coincidence, 4, 30, 33, 39, 40, 41, 79, 85, 92, 93, 96, 103, 110, 111, 112, 114
- comedy, 4, 9, 10, 13, 14, 18, 25, 113
- conventions, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 33, 113, 115
- Derrida, 1, 23, 113, 118
- episodic films, 1, 2, 4, 5, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 68, 69, 79, 112, 113, 114, 115
- episodic storytelling, 1, 3, 22, 32
- episodic structure, 3, 4, 22, 25, 28, 29, 33, 47, 113, 114, 115
- film narrative, 5, 43
- Four Rooms*, 29, 36, 116
- four-part structure, 27
- generic spectatorship, 18
- genre, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 32, 33, 110, 113, 114, 115
- genre markers, 1, 33
- Go*, 116
- Grant, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 117, 118, 119, 120
- Hollywood, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 22, 23, 26, 28, 46, 117, 119, 120
- horror film, 2, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 113
- iconography, 3, 10, 13, 14, 16, 115
- institutional aspects, 2, 3, 10
- interlocking, 3, 4, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 48, 54, 55, 63, 77, 79, 96, 103, 111, 114
- interlocking structure, 30
- Lola rennt*, 39, 42, 79, 86, 92, 107, 110, 111, 113, 114, 116
- Love Actually*, 3, 25, 30, 31, 34, 116

*Magnolia*, 30, 31, 34, 35, 38, 39, 47,  
 55, 58, 111, 113, 114, 116  
 melodrama, 9, 10, 13, 14, 25  
*Memento*, 29  
 musical, 2, 3, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18,  
 113  
 narrative, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 18,  
 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34,  
 35, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 58, 79,  
 93, 104, 107, 110, 112, 114, 115  
 narrative networks, 33  
 narratology, 5, 42, 43, 44  
*Nashville*, 31, 116  
*New York, I Love You*, 40, 47, 92, 96,  
 103, 110, 112, 113, 116  
*Night on Earth*, 29, 33, 41, 116  
*Nine Lives*, 3, 25, 29, 40, 41, 116  
*Paris Je T'aime*, 3, 29, 116  
 perspective, 2, 8, 32, 34, 37, 44, 68,  
 75, 76, 78, 105, 111  
*Pulp Fiction*, 22, 37, 116  
*Rashomon*, 37, 116  
 repetition, 4, 10, 33, 41, 63, 66, 79,  
 89, 90, 92, 103, 104, 107, 109,  
 110, 111, 112, 114  
*Sad Movie*, 30, 34, 116  
 sequential structure, 29, 30, 33, 35  
*Short Cuts*, 30, 31, 34, 35, 40, 47, 48,  
 110, 111, 113, 114, 116  
 similarity, 3, 4, 30, 33, 41, 63, 66,  
 68, 78, 89, 92, 104, 105, 107, 110,  
 112, 114  
 simultaneity, 4, 33, 34, 35, 47, 48,  
 54, 55, 58, 68, 75, 78, 79, 84, 89,  
 96, 110, 111, 112, 114  
*Sliding Doors*, 38, 79, 80, 86, 89,  
 111, 113, 116  
*The Five Senses*, 3, 38, 116  
*The Hours*, 3, 30, 35, 47, 58, 63, 68,  
 107, 111, 114, 116  
*The Red Violin*, 30, 35, 36, 47, 58,  
 68, 111, 116  
*Things You Can Tell Just by Looking  
 at Her*, 3, 29, 116  
 times and places, 33, 36, 62, 66, 68,  
 110, 111, 114  
 traits, 2, 4, 7, 14, 27, 28, 31, 33, 113  
*Vantage Point*, 4, 24, 30, 33, 35, 37,  
 42, 47, 68, 69, 74, 78, 79, 110,  
 111, 113, 116  
 verisimilitude, 18  
*Women Love Women*, 35, 47, 103,  
 107, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116  
*I'm not There*, 25

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